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## QUARTERLY

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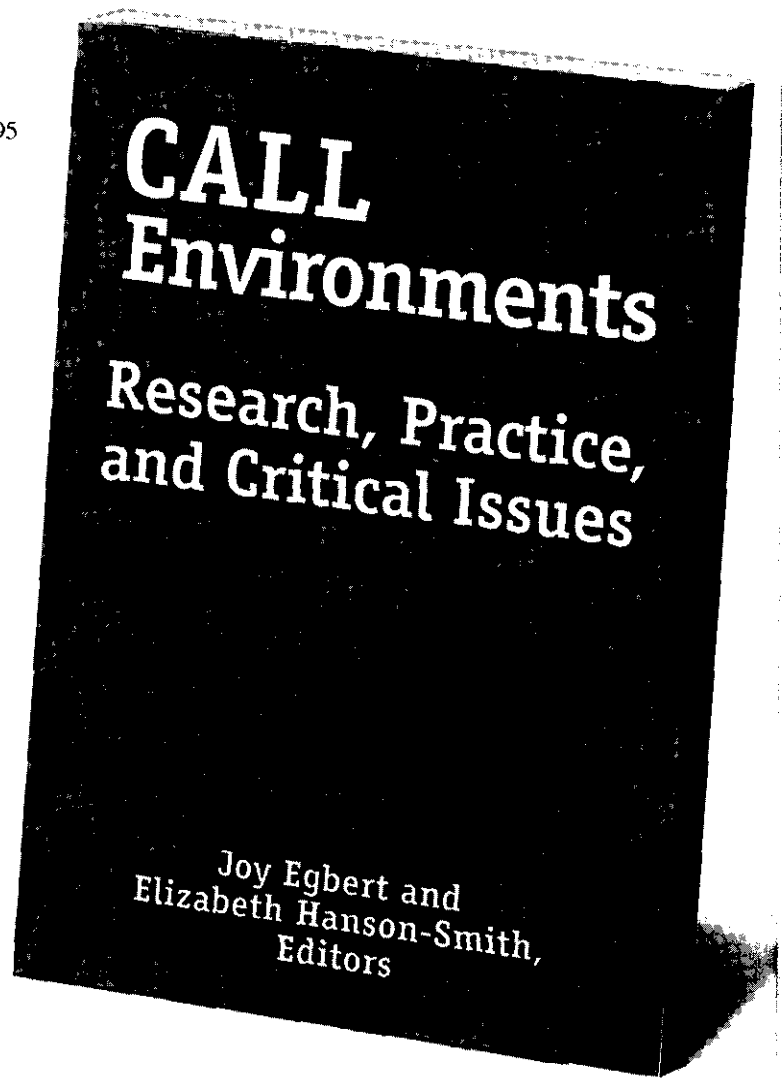
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# TESOL QUARTERLY

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## Editor's Note

■ In this issue, guest editor Alastair Pennycook presents a broad sample of work on critical approaches to TESOL. The variety of papers attests to the profession's growing interest in the application of critical theory in ESOL teaching and research. At the same time, they begin to respond to readers' requests for more thorough treatment of the application of critical theory in TESOL. I am grateful to Alastair for his diligence in selecting papers that provide glimpses into ESOL teaching practices around the world while illustrating many dimensions of critical approaches. On behalf of the *TESOL Quarterly's* readership, I thank Alastair for the time and energy he devoted to this job as well as for the excellent introduction to the issues he provides in his article.

Carol A. Chapelle

## In This Issue

■ It was with both excitement and trepidation that I took on the task of editing this special-topic issue on critical approaches to TESOL. Deciding to cast my net as widely as possible with this general title, I was not sure what I would receive. In the end, over 60 proposals from all over the world revealed what I had hoped: There was indeed a great deal of interesting and different work going on. It was, first, a difficult task to decide which pieces to send for review and which to turn down. It was then an immense task to deal with the many different articles and the reviews of the articles, and to work out their placement. In the end, however, I believe the diversity and passion represented here justifies the many hours.

I struggled for a long time over how to categorize the contributions, as I have been wary of perpetuating some of the divides such categorization can perpetuate. I placed longer articles in the first section and shorter pieces that describe critical practice or debate various issues in critical work in a

second section. Two book reviews also deal with the topic of critical approaches to TESOL.

Readers may notice that an article and a report are by authors from the institute at which I teach. I would like to point out, however, that decisions on what to include in the issue were made long before I was appointed to my new position. They are more a cause for than an effect of my moving.

I owe thanks to many people for their assistance; the authors, on whom great demands were made for writing, rewriting, clarifying, rethinking, and getting everything back to me by the next post; the additional readers for this special issue; and Kate Bisshop, who gave me some crucial editorial assistance during some of the later editing stages.

## Articles

■ My introductory article discusses critical approaches to TESOL in terms of critical domains, transformative pedagogies, and problematizing practices with the aim of pulling together various themes that cut across the contributions to this issue.

■ Awad El Karim M. Ibrahim looks at how a group of continental Francophone African youths at a Franco-Ontarian high school in Canada “become Black” as they enter a world that already constructs them as Black. As they start to identify with Black American forms of language and culture, including Black stylized English, hip-hop culture, and rap lyrical and linguistic styles, this identification in turn reinforces the new cultural and linguistic identities they are investing in.

■ Beginning with a moment in an ESL classroom discussion about two women walking arm-in-arm, Cynthia Nelson weaves a complex understanding of questions of sexuality in ESL classrooms. The small amount of work in TESOL that has addressed sexual identity, she suggests, has tended to do so from a gay or lesbian focus on inclusion rather than from a position of inquiry based on queer theory.

■ Angel M. Y. Lin focuses on classroom episodes from English classes in four Hong Kong high school located in different socioeconomic areas. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Lin argues that different pedagogical approaches may be compatible with, may be incompatible with, or may challenge the habitus of the students. This, she argues, may have major implications for either the reproduction or the potential transformation of the students’ social worlds.

■ Centered around a graduate class set up to explore the construction of the notion of *native* and *nonnative speakers*, Janina Brutt-Griffler and Keiko K. Samimy’s article discusses the students’ exploration of how they were positioned by this construct and how they might work to change this. The authors argue for the importance of hearing and working with students’ own understandings of their experiences as English teachers so that any attempt to change can be based on students’ own lived worlds.

- Maria Inês Pagliarini Cox and Ana Antônia de Assis-Peterson report on a study of Brazilian English teachers' perceptions of critical pedagogy. Pointing to the irony in the apparent return of critical pedagogy to Brazil as an academic discourse disconnected to practice, they show that English teachers are generally unaware of critical pedagogy and generally conceive of themselves as agents of good as they prepare students to be successful in the global language for the new global world.
- B. Kumaravadivelu's article is an attempt to conceptualize a framework for conducting critical classroom discourse analysis. Critiquing the scope and method of current models of classroom interaction analysis and classroom discourse analysis, he makes a case for using poststructuralist and post-colonialist understandings of discourse to develop a critical framework for understanding what actually transpires in the L2 classroom.

## Praxis and Debates

- Klaudia M. Rivera reports on a participatory education program at a community-based adult education program in New York City. Committed to the development of bilingualism and biliteracy, the program integrated Spanish-language literacy and basic education with ESL, computer and video technology, and popular research.
- A participatory education framework for an immigrant women's ESOL class in Washington, DC, is the focus of Dana Frye's article. She describes how the participatory curriculum developed for a class of 17 working-class Latina women started to change the lives of these women.
- Char Ullman reports on a teacher education project in which ESL teachers from five community-based organizations in Chicago developed a textbook about immigrant rights in the United States. The difficult process ultimately not only produced significant course materials but also changed teachers' understanding of their classes, students, and teaching practices.
- Looking at the development of literacy among children from non-English-speaking backgrounds, Jennifer Hammond and Mary Macken-Horarik argue that the demands of engaging in critical analysis are often underestimated and that teachers therefore need to ensure that students have sufficient control over forms of literacy before they engage in critical analysis.
- Meg Gebhard addresses some of the recent debates in second language acquisition (SLA). Drawing on studies of school restructuring, she argues that SLA needs to be understood as an institutional phenomenon, for the ways in which schools are structured present or constrain possibilities for language use and development.
- Bill Johnston's account of his relationship to critical pedagogy shows both why he has been drawn to many of its ideas and why he has resisted embracing it unreservedly. His critical appraisal of the rhetoric of critical



pedagogy points to the need always to be critical and skeptical about areas that claim a critical high ground.

■ Based on her own development of a sense of the possibilities presented by feminist orientations towards academic work, Ardiss Mackie's report concerns how she incorporated feminist insights into a curriculum evaluation project. These insights led her to develop bottom-up evaluation procedures that could account much more for the lived experiences of participants.

■ Sarah Benesch takes on recent debates about the teaching of critical thinking. Drawing a distinction between critical thinking and dialogic thinking, she demonstrates how critical dialogue can help students explore their own views and views students might not have previously been exposed to.

■ In his exploration of the arguments around critical discourse analysis (CDA), Steve Price suggests that neither proponents nor critics of CDA have fully come to terms with the implications of what it means to acquire a discourse.

Also in this issue:

- Reviews: Tara Goldstein's review of three books that deal with language, race, ethnicity, and discrimination concludes by arguing that issues of power, race relations, and discrimination are embedded in both the content and the processes of ESL pedagogy. Bonny Norton's review of Brian Morgan's recent book points to the importance of such accounts of critical ESL work in the community.

Alastair Pennycook, Guest Editor

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# Introduction: Critical Approaches to TESOL

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ALASTAIR PENNYCOOK  
University of Technology, Sydney

This introductory article aims to pull together the unifying concerns in the varied articles, reports, and discussions in this special issue. I focus on three main themes that may be said to constitute critical approaches to TESOL: (a) the domain or area of interest (To what extent do particular domains define a critical approach?), transformative pedagogy (How does the particular approach to education hope to change things?), and a self-reflexive stance on critical theory (To what extent does the work constantly question common assumptions, including its own?). Whether in terms of the domain in which they operate, the pedagogies they use, or the theories they engage, I argue here for the importance of seeing critical approaches to TESOL not as a static body of knowledge and practices but rather as always being in flux, always questioning, restively problematizing the given, being aware of the limits of their own knowing, and bringing into being new schemas of politicisation. The critical approaches to TESOL developed here can both help us as TESOL professionals understand in much more complex ways the contexts in which TESOL occurs and offer the prospect of change. Given the cultural politics of English teaching in the world, critical approaches to TESOL may help us deal with some of the most significant issues of our time.

What is a critical approach to TESOL? Given the scope, breadth, and quality of the contributions to this issue, it is tempting to leave them to answer this question themselves. And in many ways, the broad selection of papers here certainly presents a wide enough spectrum of ideas, approaches, and pedagogies to claim a degree of representativeness. Indeed, one of my criteria for sending papers for review, or reluctantly turning them down, was my attempt to include as wide a range as possible. The rather vague title for the issue was intended to address both critical ways of teaching English and critical appraisals of contexts in which English is being taught, that is to say, both accounts of teaching practice and research on teaching contexts (though another goal of this issue was to break down some of these divides, as I discuss

later). I also aimed to make this issue as diverse as possible in terms of topics, contexts, orientations, and backgrounds of authors. Thus, on one level this issue should help give an overview of what might constitute critical approaches to TESOL.

Unfortunately, such a view is overoptimistic for several reasons. First, critical approaches to TESOL involve both pedagogy and research. Despite my efforts to include a healthy mixture of the two, the often difficult relationships between them, the very nature of a journal like *TESOL Quarterly*, and the requirements for inclusion inevitably tilt things away from accounts of what ordinary teachers are doing in ordinary classrooms around the world. Some very interesting accounts of critical education are included here, but they reveal only a tiny fraction of what is going on day by day in ESL classrooms. Thus, although this issue includes accounts, for example, of high school students in Hong Kong, Canada, the United States, and Australia; popular adult education programs in large urban centres in the United States; teacher education programs; critical pedagogy in Brazil; and much more, it still only scratches the surface of the work that goes on in the many TESOL contexts around the world.

The second, related point concerns who gets published in the international context. The power and politics of publishing in English once again act as a major gatekeeper. Who actually reads a journal such as this one? What institutions or individuals can afford it? Who has time to read it? To whom does it speak in terms of ideas and practices that resonate with local contexts? What is published is also a question of who has the right sort of *linguistic* and *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1991; a concept taken up by various writers in this issue) to have an article published: Who knows the relevant codes of language and research—the “secret language” of academic work? Which ways of framing knowledge and research will be accepted? Into which discourses does one need to gain entry in order to become a member of this community? In guest editing this issue, I have tried to be inclusive, encourage different forms of writing, and encourage play with academic norms, but only within very tight constraints.

Finally, as an editor I am more than just a sieve that allows some things to pass through while stopping others. My own editorial hand, as well as the comments of the many reviewers of the contributions, has inevitably influenced greatly what is included here as a critical approach to TESOL. Nice though it would be simply to let these articles stand alone, I therefore explain in this introduction what I see as a critical approach to TESOL and how I think the contributions to this issue relate to that vision. This explanation is not intended to be either a history of or a state-of-the-art overview of critical work, as the contributions themselves

indeed serve that purpose; rather, I focus on three main unifying themes that, in my opinion, constitute critical approaches to TESOL:

1. the domain or area of interest: To what extent do particular domains define a critical approach?
2. a transformative pedagogy: How does the particular approach to education hope to change things?
3. a self-reflexive stance on critical theory: To what extent does the work constantly question common assumptions, including its own?

I also discuss various points of contention within the critical arguments presented here.

## CRITICAL DOMAINS

A first important aspect of critical work is the domain. At the most general, domain has to do with attempts to connect the microrelations of TESOL—classrooms, teaching approaches, interactions—with broader social and political relations. It is not enough, however, simply to draw connections between the micro and the macro. This is typically what sociolinguistics purports to do, but as Williams (1992) suggests, sociolinguistics can be critical only to the extent that it has a critical sociology as part of its makeup; that is to say, it needs a form of sociology that aims not merely to describe social formations such as class or gender but also to critique the ways in which such social formations are linked to questions of power and inequality. Thus, although critiquing work in second language acquisition (SLA), for example, might be important because it has tended to locate the process of learning solely in the psychological domain without taking into account the social, economic, cultural, political, or physical domains in which language learning takes place, these contexts of learning must also be dealt with critically (see, e.g., Gebhard's discussion in this issue of the different effects of school restructuring on learning possibilities for ESL students).

Typically, therefore, critical work in general has focused on issues of class, race, or gender, in which relations of power and inequality are often at their most obvious in terms of both social or structural inequity (e.g., unequal pay, access to jobs and education) and the cultural or ideological frameworks that support such inequity (e.g., discrimination; prejudice; beliefs about what is normal, right, or proper). More recently, however, critical work has sought to broaden the scope of such domains, focusing increasingly on areas such as sexuality, ethnicity, and representations of Otherness while also attempting to explore how these domains are frequently interconnected. This reorientation, therefore, seeks to

explore multiple ways in which power may operate in social life; it tries to take on board the complex intersections among different forms of identity; and it shifts the focus away from considering only material conditions of inequality in order to show how culture or discourse may play crucial roles in perpetuating the ways difference is understood, reproduced, or changed.

## TESOL, Power, and Inequality

The first constitutive element of critical work in TESOL, then, is an attempt to locate aspects of teaching English to speakers of other (othered?) languages within a broader, critical view of social and political relations. It is not enough, therefore, just to try to connect TESOL to the world in which it occurs; this connection must focus, as all the contributions to this issue do, on questions of power, inequality, discrimination, resistance, and struggle. Ibrahim (this issue) addresses issues of race in his demonstration of how students from non-English-speaking African backgrounds studying in French schools in Canada “become Black” as they enter into the racialized world of North America. This process of becoming Black is intimately tied up with the forms of English and popular culture with which these students start to identify. Goldstein’s review of three books also addresses questions of race and ethnicity, and shows why such questions are fundamentally important to language education.

Class is the principal concern addressed by Lin in her argument in this issue that particular ways of teaching English in Hong Kong (or elsewhere) may lead either to the reproduction or to the transformation of class-based inequality. Ibrahim similarly asks what the implications are of his students identifying with marginality. Gender runs as a theme through a number of contributions to this issue, from Rivera’s and Frye’s accounts of participatory research and curricula in immigrant women’s education in the United States to Mackie’s account of her development of a feminist perspective in curriculum evaluation. Meanwhile, questions of sexuality and sexual identity are the focus of Nelson’s analysis of a discussion in an ESL classroom about the implications of two women walking arm-in-arm down the street. Benesch’s account of a discussion in an English for academic purposes (EAP) classroom also raises questions about responses to sexual identity. This report also deals with the issue of violence, which itself might be seen as a subtheme running through some of the contributions: violence as a response to difference; violence, gender, and rap music; violence and women in education; and numerous contexts of *symbolic violence* (for discussion, see Lin’s article) through constructions such as *the native speaker*.

Other contributors focus on different configurations of power and inequality. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy point out the need to address the inequalities in the relationship between the constructs of the *native speaker* and the *nonnative speaker*, and Cox and de Assis-Peterson look at the relationships between academic discourses on critical pedagogy and the actual knowledge of critical pedagogy held by teachers of English in Brazil. Ironically, critical pedagogy, which is often seen to have emerged from Brazil through the work of Paulo Freire, now appears to have reentered Brazil as an academic discourse disconnected from its original popular roots. Johnston's discussion of critical pedagogy raises similar questions about the relationship between an academic rhetoric of critical pedagogy and actual practices in classrooms.

Many of these domains are interwoven. Sexual orientation becomes linked with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds: How do individuals from different cultural orientations understand, produce, or perform different sexual orientations? The Latina ethnicities of the women in the popular education programs discussed by Frye and Rivera are also tied up with their class and gender identities as poor, unemployed, and sometimes abused immigrant women. As Ibrahim makes clear, not only race but also questions of class and gender are significant for his African high school students. While enjoying privileged status as English teachers who have traveled to North America to further their studies, the diverse group of students described by Brutt-Griffler and Samimy also find themselves disenfranchised as nonnative speakers of English. The notion of native and nonnative speakers, furthermore, is interwoven with issues of race and ethnicity, as one's nativeness as a speaker of English is often assumed to correlate with the paleness of one's skin.

## TESOL and the Global Power of English

With various degrees of explicitness, many of the issues discussed in these articles, reports, and reviews are played out against the background of the global power of English. This theme is a central one in the discussion of teacher education for nonnative speakers of English. It is also a significant background to understanding attitudes towards English language teaching in Brazil (Cox & de Assis-Peterson's article) and a significant factor in the position of English in Hong Kong (Lin's article). Taken together, the contributions to this issue reveal an intricate patterning of power relationships involving language, gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, popular culture, education, immigration, teaching practices, curriculum development, and other concerns. The contexts in which TESOL occurs are interwoven with these concerns, and the accounts in this issue explore how a critical understanding of these

relationships is crucial to an understanding of the contexts of TESOL. Thus, the contributors not only lend a great deal of complexity to the notion of *context* in relationship to TESOL (see Gebhard's and Price's reports for further discussion of context) but also view it politically.

## Critical Work and Normativity

To some readers, critical work in TESOL may seem to boil down to a mixture of TESOL and leftist politics. Such an objection has two strands: On the one hand, one might argue that politics should stay out of TESOL; on the other hand, the political stance taken here may be seen as demonstrating an unacceptable normativity: One who espouses leftist politics is being critical; one who doesn't, isn't. The first objection is fairly easy to deal with: The vast majority of work in TESOL remains locked within conservative or liberal frameworks, so a healthy dose of leftism is justifiable as a counterbalance. But the second concern demands a more complex response.

First, any attempt to depoliticise the notion of critical work needs to be resisted. As Benesch argues, advocates of so-called critical thinking espouse this idea of an apolitical version of critical work. But critical thinking, as an apolitical orientation towards a general questioning scepticism, is a far cry from the sort of critical work discussed in this issue. Critical approaches to TESOL are fundamentally political, but the critical approaches discussed here do not adhere in any simple sense to a normative leftist politics. Indeed, we as TESOL professionals need to move away from the modernist-emancipatory assuredness of traditional leftist approaches to critical work and instead engage with a more problematizing stance that always forces us to question the ethics and politics of what we do. As I suggested above, the contributions to this issue evidence a complex interweaving of multiple concerns related to power.

On the one hand, then, critical approaches to TESOL must necessarily take up certain positions and stances: The view of language or of language learning cannot be an autonomous one that backs away from connecting language to broader political concerns; the understanding of education must see pedagogy as a question of cultural politics; and the focus on politics must be accountable to broader political and ethical visions that put inequality, oppression, and compassion to the fore. On the other hand, it is important to avoid a narrow and normative vision of how those politics work. Foucault (1980) states the issue well, suggesting that "the problem is not so much one of defining a political 'position' (which is to choose from a pre-existing set of possibilities) but to imagine and to bring into being new schemas of politicisation" (p. 190). Perhaps

this is a crucial challenge for critical approaches to TESOL: Rather than mapping a static, given politics onto contexts of TESOL, this special-topic issue is about imagining and bringing into being new schemas of politicisation.

## TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGIES

If a constitutive element of critical approaches to TESOL is a focus on the inequitable contexts in which language education takes place, a second element is a pedagogical focus on changing those conditions. This theme goes to the heart of a key issue in critical work: the questions of reproduction, transformation, structure, and agency. Critical analyses of social structure and the ways in which social relations may be culturally or ideologically maintained often tend to be pessimistic, deterministic, and reproductive; that is to say, they tend to suggest that people are trapped in unequal relations of power (e.g., men are more powerful than women, the power of English goes on increasing, racism has always been and will always be part of human life) and that most of what people do simply reproduces those relations. A more useful approach to critical work, particularly in education, however, needs some vision both of what a preferable state of affairs might be and of how one might start to work towards it. Thus, a second crucial element of a critical approach to TESOL is the inclusion of a means of transformation.

But to envisage possibilities of change requires a way of thinking about how people can act differently. The liberal humanist view of individuals as completely independent, free, creative entities is rightly rejected from a critical standpoint: Thought, movement, and speech are always constrained in multiple ways. Yet an all-encompassing view of people as nothing but ideological dupes or discursive ventriloquists (i.e., everything they say, do, or think is predetermined by ideologies or discourses) is surely overdeterministic, leaving no possibilities for change or individual agency. How to reconcile degrees of freedom with degrees of constraint is one of the toughest conundrums in critical work. Price's report in this issue tackles some of these concerns, arguing that neither critical approaches to discourse (critical discourse analysis [CDA]) nor liberal critiques of CDA have come to terms with issues of structure and agency in the context of how people take up positions in discourse.

### The Problematic of Awareness

A critical approach to TESOL that aims to do more than describe pessimistically what is wrong and instead suggests possibilities for change



therefore needs a way to suggest how change might happen. A common, though by no means unproblematic, argument in critical work is that awareness is an initial step in the process of change. Thus, Fairclough and his colleagues (e.g., 1992) have developed the notion of *critical language awareness* as an essential element of social change. Also significant in this context is Freire's (e.g., 1970) notion of *conscientization*, a cornerstone of his work in critical literacy (see also Mackie's account in this issue of the development of her own feminist consciousness). A first step in critical work may therefore be to develop an awareness of the issues; nothing will change unless people know things need to ("if it ain't broken, don't fix it"). But it is important to consider very carefully what awareness might mean (see Price's report in this issue). Work that aims to make people more aware of their own oppression can often be pessimistic and patronizing, especially if it is only a top-down attempt to get people to see how they are oppressed. It is this stance of preacherly modernist-emancipatory pedagogy, which some critical writers and educators seem to advocate, that many other teachers, students, and readers have come to reject (see Gore, 1993).

The contributions to this issue, by contrast, seek to raise awareness in different ways. Some of the accounts can help explain the complex politics of, say, investment in forms of popular culture and language by high school students as they become redefined and redefine themselves as Black (Ibrahim's article) or ways in which sexual identities emerge and are submerged within ESL classrooms (Nelson's article). On the other hand, Frye and Rivera report on programs that seek in their educational practice to raise awareness through collaborative research projects on local contexts, and Ullman describes the development of an ESOL curriculum aimed at helping students and their teachers gain a better understanding of immigrants' rights by preparing a textbook on the topic. What start to emerge, then, are pedagogical approaches that seek to work with students in developing their understanding of the wider contexts in which they are learning English.

The pedagogical approach in Ullman's work in this issue, as well as in the programs described by both Frye and Rivera and the curriculum evaluation described by Mackie, is based on participatory approaches to education. As all four emphasize, a crucial element in any transformative pedagogy is to put the curriculum in the hands of the students. Thus some of the contributors report on a critical approach to the larger context in which the students (in these cases immigrants, often women, in large urban centres in the United States) find themselves whereas others describe a critical approach to the microrelations of pedagogy, so that issues of power, teaching, and knowledge are also addressed in the educational process. There are close parallels here with the work described in Morgan's recent book (1998; reviewed by Norton in this

issue) on his approach to TESOL in a community centre in Toronto. In their approach to teacher education for overseas students, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy principally attempt to encourage students to reflect on their own histories through discussion and diary writing so that they are able to see both how they have been positioned as nonnative speakers and how they might start to make things happen differently.

Different approaches to transformative pedagogies occur elsewhere in this issue. Benesch seeks to develop a dialogic relationship with her students so that the EAP classroom becomes a site in which teachers and students challenge and question norms and assumptions through discussion. In a very different approach to critical literacy, Hammond and Macken-Horarik, drawing on the work of Michael Halliday and others in Australia, argue that doing critical literacy is impossible without prior control over various generic forms. Lin's discussion of pedagogies leads in another direction: how different ways of teaching, different uses of Cantonese and English, and different ways of asking questions may have major repercussions on students' response and resistance. Lin proposes not an overtly critical approach to teaching in order to overcome inequality but rather an awareness that many of the microprocesses in classrooms may have reproductive or transformative potential.

## Responses to Forms of Difference

Two concerns within a transformative pedagogy relate to pedagogical responses to forms of difference. Put simply, the first hinges on whether teachers see their pedagogical goal primarily as giving marginalised students access to the mainstream through overt pedagogical strategies or as trying to transform the mainstream by placing greater emphasis on inclusivity. The second concern is the level of engagement with questions of difference, whether this engagement takes the form of curricular or pedagogical inclusivity, an overt focus on difference as a social issue, or a pedagogical engagement with difference in terms of history and desire.

### Access or Transformation?

The first concern, which has been widely debated in Australia, involves the question of access as opposed to transformation, or, translated into more pedagogical terms, *genre* as opposed to *voice*. Drawing on arguments such as Delpit's (1988) that children from African American backgrounds are not helped by well-meaning White, liberal pedagogies that back away from overtly teaching the so-called cultures of power and on the similar arguments put forward by genre theorists in Australia (e.g., Christie, 1996), Hammond and Macken-Horarik argue that their

concern is not so much with transforming the social order as with ensuring that children from less privileged backgrounds gain access to powerful linguistic and cultural tools (genres). They contend, therefore, that students need to master generic structure before they can engage in critical literacy and that skipping that overt instructional process in favour of a general injunction to be critical does a disservice to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As the alignment with Delpit's (1988) critique suggests, such access models of critical literacy have been developed in reaction to the so-called student-centred pedagogies that have originated predominantly in North America. Viewed from educational orientations in other parts of the world, this pedagogical focus seems unacceptably centered on the individual and lacking in any overt instructional processes. The danger is that the political in education can become subsumed under a rather bland notion of power sharing in the classroom. Given this North American pedagogical orientation, notions such as participatory education (see above) must not slide into an interest only in a redistribution of power in the classroom. As I have argued with respect to the notion of *learner autonomy* (Pennycook, 1997a), critical work that is reduced to democracy in the classroom becomes elided too easily with so-called student-centred approaches to teaching or even so-called communicative or task-based approaches. Whatever values such pedagogical approaches may have, they cannot be assumed to be in any way critical in themselves. A critical approach to TESOL is more than arranging the chairs in a circle and discussing social issues. Thus any participatory approach to education must look not only at questions of power sharing in the curriculum but also at the broader critical concerns outlined in the section above on critical domains.

Critics have also suggested that this orientation towards democracy and the individual underlies the centrality of the notion of *voice* in North American critical pedagogy. As Luke (1996) describes it, the "Freirean model theorises 'empowerment' as the opening of pedagogical spaces for marginalised peoples to articulate their interests and develop an analysis of the world; . . . power is vested phonocentrically in the 'dangerous memories' of individual and collective voice" (p. 315). For some, this phonocentric idealism looks less like the radical program for transformation that its proponents claim it is (see Johnston's report for a critique) and more like a liberal concern with being inclusive or a romanticization of the notion of voice (see, e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 1993).

An access model of critical literacy seen from the other side, however, looks far too much like an assimilatory model to help students enter an unchallenged mainstream. As Luke (1996) suggests, this model operates with an unexamined "logocentric assumption that mastery of powerful

text types can lead to intellectual and cognitive development, educational achievement and credentials, and enhanced social access and mobility" (p. 315). Furthermore, as Lee (1997) points out, this approach can amount to a *pedagogy of deferral*: The critical moment is always put off in favour of mastery of certain forms. Thus, according to Luke, both the logocentric "access" model and the phonocentric "voice" model of critical education "tend to presuppose what we might call a 'hypodermic effect' of literacy: that their preferred literate practices directly inculcate 'power'" (p. 315).

Of course, neither position is often found in its extreme form. Most adherents to any access model of education also emphasize the importance of critical readings of texts, and most adherents to a voice model acknowledge that students need both the space for their voices to be heard and the possibility of becoming proficient in dominant forms of language and culture. But how do we as teachers balance these competing demands in our pedagogies? And, perhaps most important, how do we go beyond a naive belief in the "hypodermic" effects of our pedagogies? As Luke (1996) suggests, without an adequate "sociological theory of power, conflict and difference" that can help "account for why and how some discourses, knowledges and texts 'count' more than others" (p. 312), we have inadequate grounds to justify our pedagogies. This is one reason why, as I argue further in the section on critical theory, our pedagogies must also be linked to adequate theories.

## A Pedagogy of Engagement

How do critical approaches to TESOL deal with the types of complexity and diversity outlined by the contributions to this issue? If one of the central concerns of a critical approach to TESOL is the need to engage with questions of difference, this may be done in terms of inclusivity, issues, or engagement (Nelson compares what she calls *inclusion* and *inquiry*). Inclusivity may be seen as the struggle for diverse representations in classrooms and materials: Fewer wholesome White families who look as if they have walked off the back of Kellogg's Cornflakes packets (after another regular dental checkup) and more single-parent families, gay and lesbian parents, people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, and different physical possibilities. Although such alternative representations may broaden the scope of classes and allow students to identify more with texts and roles (see in this context Jewell's 1998 discussion of transgendered identity in the ESL classroom), if left at this level, inclusivity does little to go beyond a rather static sense of possibility.

A second way to take up difference is to turn such questions into "issues" by overtly addressing them in discussions. To the extent that

doing so may confront social concerns more directly than does inclusivity, it can generate a strong critical dimension to a classroom. Nevertheless, there are also limitations here. First, as I have discussed elsewhere (Pennycook, 1997b), many classrooms based around issues tend to operate with a rather tired set of social issues. Similarly, Schenke (1996) points to what she calls “the tired treatment of gender and ‘women’s lib’ in many of our ESL textbooks” (p. 156). Second, as Benesch’s report on a discussion in her EAP class shows, it is not so much the discussion itself but rather the teacher’s interventions that may count (see also the role of the teacher in the discussion described by Nelson). And third, the whole idea of discussing issues is based on something of a rationalist approach to education. As Misson (1996) argues with respect to homophobia and Rizvi (1993) in the context of racism, to develop antihomophobic or antiracist education requires much more than a rational, intellectual explanation of what is wrong with racism and homophobia. Rather, it requires an engagement with people’s investment in particular discourses, that is, in questions of desire: “Our subscription to certain beliefs is not just a rational or a socially-determined thing, but we invest in them because they conform to the shape of our desires” (Misson, 1996, p. 121). Thus, as Ibrahim makes clear, to engage pedagogically with the Black high school students in his study, teachers need to be able to work at the level of investment and desire.

This way of dealing with difference leads to what might be called a *pedagogy of engagement*: an approach to TESOL that sees such issues as gender, race, class, sexuality, and postcolonialism as so fundamental to identity and language that they need to form the basis of curricular organization and pedagogy. Thus, in place of discussions of issues, Schenke (1996) proposes what she calls a “practice in historical engagement,” a focus on “the struggle over histories (and forgetting) in relation to the cultures of English and to the cultures students bring with them to the classroom already-knowing” (p. 156). From this point of view, then, questions of difference, identity, and culture are not merely issues to discuss but pertain to how people have come to be as they are, how discourses have structured people’s lives. Questions of gender or race, therefore, make up the underlying rationale for the course. “Feminism,” Schenke argues, “like antiracism, is thus not simply one more social issue in ESL but a way of thinking, a way of teaching, and, most importantly, a way of learning” (p. 158). From this point of view, taking a critical approach to TESOL does not entail introducing a “critical element” into a classroom but rather involves an attitude, a way of thinking and teaching. And change in our students is not about the predictable results of awareness or mastery but about the unpredictable effects of a changed relationship to our histories and desires (see also Nelson’s and Price’s accounts).

What emerge, then, from a consideration of critical practice in TESOL are several important pedagogical points:

1. Critical approaches to TESOL need a transformative dimension as well as a critically analytic one.
2. The notion of a critical approach to TESOL is in no way reducible to teaching techniques, methods, or approaches as they are commonly understood within TESOL.
3. To reiterate a point raised in the previous section, critical approaches to TESOL should not be conflated with notions such as critical thinking (see Benesch's discussion). Critical thinking is generally an apolitical approach to developing a sort of questioning attitude in students; critical approaches to TESOL have to do with a political understanding of the location of pedagogy and the development of a way of teaching aimed at transformation.
4. Neither should critical approaches to TESOL be assumed to be critical pedagogy applied to TESOL. As Johnston points out, there are many problems with critical pedagogy as commonly defined, and these problems need to be subjected to as much critical scrutiny as anything else.
5. If critical approaches are to engage with questions of power and difference, they need both theoretical and pedagogical means of doing so: What beliefs about the effects of voice or of powerful texts may remain as unexamined subtexts to teachers' own pedagogies?
6. Given the complexity of social, cultural, and pedagogical relations, a critical approach to TESOL needs to work at multiple levels, including an understanding of a critical domain, an approach to pedagogy that aims at transformation, a way of shifting pedagogical relations to give students more curricular control, and ways of engaging with difference not merely in terms of inclusivity and issues but also at the level of desire.

## CRITICAL THEORY AS PROBLEMATIZING PRACTICE

I would also argue that critical approaches to TESOL need to be grounded in some form of critical theory. Because of the difficulty of some critical theory and because of a tendency at times to dismiss theory as disconnected to practice, critical approaches not uncommonly reject theory as irrelevant. As Weedon (1987) points out, there is a feminist tradition of hostility towards theory—based, on the one hand, on the argument that theorising, particularly dominant forms of Western rationality, has long been part of patriarchal power and control over women

and, on the other hand, on the argument that women need to draw on their own experiences in order to guide political action (see also Mackie's report). A similar argument often emerges from contexts of critical practice: that the real work is being done in classrooms, community centres, and so on and that theory is only the empty babble of those with too much time on their hands. Indeed, Cox and de Assis-Peterson's article suggests that critical pedagogy for TESOL in Brazil has become little more than an academic discourse disconnected from everyday teaching practice. Johnston's critique of critical pedagogy points to similar problems.

These problems, however, should not lead to a rejection of the role of theory. Such a position would surely be problematic: Any pedagogical choice implies some kind of theory, and talk about such notions as empowerment, knowledge, power, inequality, race, class, gender, and sexuality requires that they be theoretically grounded. Neither pedagogical practice nor personal experience can be assumed to be unmediated by theoretical standpoints. Weedon's (1987) argument is that whereas both the patriarchy of theory and the primacy of experience need to be taken very seriously, they should not constitute an argument against theory, so that "rather than turning our backs on theory and taking refuge in experience alone, we should think in terms of transforming both the social relations of knowledge production and the type of knowledge produced" (p. 7). In other words, feminism and, as I argue here more generally, critical approaches to TESOL need forms of critical theory that can help inform thinking about social structure, knowledge, politics, the individual, or language.

Furthermore, a more useful way forward than to think in terms of theory and practice and their relationship—an unfortunate dichotomy that is constantly repeated in TESOL and indeed is maintained by the division between *TESOL Quarterly* and *TESOL Journal*—is to consider the notion of *praxis*, a term used explicitly in a number of articles here, such as Rivera's on critical praxis in the El Barrio Popular Education Program and Brutt-Griffler and Samimy's critical praxis for nonnative-English-speaking teachers in a TESOL program. Praxis may be understood as the mutually constitutive roles of theory grounded in practice and practice grounded in theory. It is a way of thinking about critical work that does not dichotomise theory and practice but rather sees them as always dependent on each other. Thus, in different ways, the contributions to this issue show not only how things might be changed through transformative practice and how TESOL professionals might think differently through critical theory but also how theory and practice may be mutually supportive. Morgan's (1998) book is a good example of this sort of melding of theory and practice into praxis (see Norton's review in this issue).

## “The Restive Problematization of the Given”

Dealing with theory requires a decision on which sort of critical theory. The big-C, big-T Critical Theory that often forms the background to critical work (derived from neo-Marxist thought and often associated with the Frankfurt School, of whom Jürgen Habermas is the best known current heir) is, as Dean (1994) suggests, a form of “critical modernism,” a version of critical theory that tends to critique “modernist narratives in terms of the one-sided, pathological, advance of technocratic or instrumental reason they celebrate” only to offer “an alternative, higher version of rationality” in their place (p. 3). This view of critical theory touches on the concerns I have raised about a form of modernist-emancipatory politics that seeks to make people more aware of the truth of their condition: There is a problem if critical theory only offers a rationalist account of social conditions that is supposed to supplant a possibly irrationalist account (an understanding obscured by ideology). A critical approach that claims only to emancipate people through a greater awareness of their conditions is both arrogant and doomed to failure. As the discussion of engagement in the previous section suggests, a more plausible way forward is through a critical engagement with people’s wishes, desires, and histories, that is, a way of thinking that pushes one constantly to question rather than to pontificate.

In place of critical theory, Dean (1994) goes on to propose what he calls a *problematizing* practice. This, he suggests, is a critical practice because “it is unwilling to accept the taken-for-granted components of our reality and the ‘official’ accounts of how they came to be the way they are” (p. 4). Thus, a crucial component of critical work is always turning a skeptical eye towards assumptions, ideas that have become naturalized, notions that are no longer questioned, or, in the words of Dean, “the restive problematization of the given” (p. 4). I therefore make a case here for critical theory as a problematizing practice that questions the role of language or discourse in social life, that asks hard questions about social and cultural categories (e.g., race, gender, ethnicity) and the way they may relate to language learning, and that constantly problematizes the givens of TESOL.

The articles and reports in this special-topic issue, then, contain discussions of many of the key thinkers and ideas in critical theory. Of all the accounts here, Kumaravadivelu’s is probably the most “theoretical.” Arguing for a way of developing a notion of critical classroom discourse analysis, this article can serve as a useful guide through issues in poststructuralism and postcolonialism. Poststructuralism, particularly the poststructuralist notion of discourse, as Kumaravadivelu contends, can greatly further current thinking on notions of power and knowledge and of dominance and resistance. Postcolonialism, often drawing on



poststructuralist insights, can then lead further into the historical and political contexts of cultural relations in a global context, raising more specifically the current and historical conditions that construct difference according to race or ethnicity (and see Pennycook, 1998). As Brutt-Griffler and Samimy make clear, constructions such as *native speaker* and *nonnative speaker* must be understood within the context of colonial and postcolonial relations. Lin's work on Hong Kong is also played out against the background of (post)colonial relations. And Ibrahim emphasizes the importance of understanding the students in his study as located within a postcolonial context.

Kumaravadivelu's article covers a number of key thinkers in these areas, including Homi K. Bhabha, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault, Edward W. Said, and Gayatri C. Spivak. Many of these thinkers turn up in other articles. Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, for example, is the central organizing background to Lin's article. Elsewhere, the work of Freire is highly influential—particularly in Cox and de Assis-Peterson's work and in the participatory and dialogic approaches to education (in Rivera's, Frye's, and Benesch's reports). Other key contemporary thinkers are central to other articles here: Judith Butler's work on gender and sexuality, as well as the crucial recent work in queer theory, forms the foundations for Nelson's article. Ibrahim draws on Bhabha, Bourdieu, Butler, Freire, Stuart Hall, bell hooks, Frantz Fanon, and others. The feminist perspectives of Patti Lather and Shoshana Felman are drawn on by Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, Mackie, Price, and others. These theorists are cited in the articles and reports in this issue not, as it sometimes may seem elsewhere, as a display of being *au fait* with the current modes of thought (e.g., Pierre Cardin sunglasses and a couple of references to Foucault) but as crucial tools for helping us as TESOL professionals to ask hard questions about many of our cherished beliefs: about sexual and cultural identities, about the possible effects of our pedagogies, about what we take classroom discourse to be, and about the roles of native and nonnative speakers.

Many of the articles and reports here not only draw on key bodies of critical theory but also push further the current theoretical understanding of important concerns. Price, for example, argues that there are many complex questions to be asked about what it actually means to acquire a discourse. According to Price, acquiring discourse cannot be considered as simply a question of mastering certain characteristics of a discourse (or genre), because, on the one hand, such characteristics have been metadiscursively defined and are therefore external to the process of acquisition and, on the other hand, because, rather than serving the interests of preexistent subjects, discourse reformulates the subject. In this view, then, the practices of discourse acquisition need to

be understood. Like Price, Gebhard not only addresses a current area of fierce debate (CDA and its critics for Price; SLA and its critics for Gebhard) but also carries the debate forward in useful ways. Similarly, other contributors develop new insights into the relationships among language and identity, race, sexuality, SLA, classroom discourse analysis, and so on.

## A Critical Approach to Critical Work

Finally, I argue for a *self-reflexive* stance on critical theory. First, we as TESOL professionals need to be constantly careful lest critical theory come to play a role that is equally unchallenged as the ideas it seeks to challenge. Thus, critical pedagogy in TESOL must not become a static body of knowledge but rather must always be open to question. When this special-topic issue was under discussion, a slightly skeptical member of *TESOL Quarterly's* Editorial Advisory Board asked whether there would be space for critical work that was critical of itself. Such self-criticism is a crucial element of critical work. An important purpose of this issue, therefore, is not only to include articles and reports that are directly critical of critical domains of work, such as Price's critique of some of the assumptions of CDA (as well as the assumptions of opponents of CDA), Johnston's account of his relationship to critical pedagogy, and Cox and de Assis-Peterson's questions about whether academic discourse about critical pedagogy has much to do with classroom practices, but also to push the authors here to question the ideas of critical theorists and to push our thinking further.

Critical approaches to TESOL, then, would do well to retain a constant skepticism, a constant questioning about the types of knowledge, theory, practice, or praxis they operate with, and an understanding that, as Spivak (1993) suggests, the notion of *critical* also needs to imply an awareness "of the limits of knowing" (p. 25). As Canagarajah (1996) has argued, critical research needs not only a focus on a critical domain but also a critical approach to the way it gets written up. Nelson's article is significant here in that it not only draws on a crucial body of critical work but also, through its own practices of reporting research, raises questions about the nature of research and the possibility of understanding what is going on. As with the other two areas of critical domains and transformative practice, the relationship to theory must always be a questioning one, never settling too long on some domain as if the field had finally arrived at a "critical theory of everything."

## CONCLUSION

I hope that the articles in this issue show that critical approaches to TESOL matter fundamentally. They offer key insights into important domains of research, possibilities for promoting change through education, and an engagement with domains of theory that are rarely given space in an area such as TESOL. In this introduction I have argued for a vision of critical approaches to TESOL that sees them not as simple recipes for implementing certain political agendas but rather as complex clusters of social, cultural, political, and pedagogical concerns. Whether in terms of the domain in which they operate, the pedagogies they use, or the theories they engage, I like to see critical approaches to TESOL as always in flux, always questioning, restively problematizing the given, aware of the limits of their own knowing, and bringing into being new schemas of politicisation.

Ge (1994) suggests that “English teachers stand at the very heart of the most crucial educational, cultural, and political issues of our time” (p. 190). This view is based on an understanding of the role of literacy education in the United States. In the context of the current global position of English, however, an even stronger case might be made for the crucial role played by teachers of English to speakers of other(ed) languages around the world. Given the global and local contexts and discourses with which English is bound up, all of us involved in TESOL might do well to consider our work not merely according to the reductive meanings often attached to labels such as *teaching* and *English* but rather as located at the very heart of some of the most crucial educational, cultural, and political issues of our time.

If we can take up such challenges, critical approaches to TESOL may become more than just an add-on to standard work in the area. For too long, work in TESOL has been too narrowly constructed to be of much interest to people outside the area. The breadth and depth of the work in this special-topic issue, by contrast, suggests that enough exciting work is going on to be of interest to a much broader audience. Indeed, the sort of work presented here may become an area of great interest to many sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, policy activists, or antiracist educators outside the domain of TESOL who have started to understand the crucial location of English teaching in the world. To take up such a challenge, we need to develop critical approaches to TESOL, because they can help us understand in much more complex ways the contexts in which TESOL occurs and offer the prospect of change. Critical approaches to TESOL may help us deal with some of the most critical issues of our time.

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# Becoming Black: Rap and Hip-Hop, Race, Gender, Identity, and the Politics of ESL Learning

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This article is about the impact of *becoming Black* on ESL learning, that is, the interrelation between identity and learning. It contends that a group of French-speaking immigrant and refugee continental African youths who are attending an urban Franco-Ontarian high school in southwestern Ontario, Canada, enters a *social imaginary*—a discursive space in which they are already imagined, constructed, and thus treated as Blacks by hegemonic discourses and groups. This imaginary is directly implicated in whom the students identify with (Black America), which in turn influences what and how they linguistically and culturally learn. They learn Black stylized English, which they access in hip-hop culture and rap lyrical and linguistic styles. This critical ethnography, conducted within an interdisciplinary framework, shows that ESL is neither neutral nor without its politics and pedagogy of desire and investment.

“**T**he problem of the twentieth century is the problem of color-line,” asserted Du Bois (1903, p. 13). If this is so, what are the implications of this prophetic statement for L2 learning and second language acquisition (SLA)? At the end of the 20th century, when identity formation is increasingly mediated by technological media, who learns what, and how is it learned? How do differently raced, gendered, sexualized, abled, and classed social identities enter the process of learning an L2? In a postcolonial era when postcolonial subjects constitute part of the metropolitan centers, what critical pedagogy is required in order not to repeat the colonial history embedded in the classroom relationship between White teachers and students of color? Finally, at a time when North American Blackness is governed by how it is negatively located in a race-conscious society, what does it mean for a Black ESL learner to acquire Black English as a second language (BESL)? In other words, what symbolic, cultural, pedagogical, and identity investments

would learners have in locating themselves politically and racially at the margin of representation?

This article is an attempt to answer these questions. Conceptually, it is located at the borderline between two indistinguishable and perhaps never separable categories of critical discourses: race and gender. The article addresses the process of *becoming Black*, in which race is as vital as gender, and articulates a political and pedagogical research framework that puts at its center the social being as embodied subjectivities that are embedded in and performed through language, culture, history, and memory (Dei, 1996; Essed, 1991; Gilroy, 1987; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Ibrahim, 1998; Rampton, 1995). As an identity configuration, becoming Black is deployed to talk about the *subject-formation project* (i.e., the process and the space within which subjectivity is formed) that is produced in and simultaneously is produced by the process of language learning, namely, learning BESL. Put more concretely, becoming Black meant learning BESL, as I show in this article, yet the very process of BESL learning produced the epiphenomenon of becoming Black. I have argued elsewhere (Ibrahim, 1998) that to become is historical. Indeed, history and the way individuals experience it govern their identity, memory, ways of being, becoming, and learning (see also Foucault, 1979, pp. 170–184). To address questions of pedagogy in this context therefore requires attending to and being concerned with the linkages among the self, identity, desire, and the English(es) that students invest in.

## BACKGROUND

This article is part of a larger ethnographic study (Ibrahim, 1998) that made use of the critical frames<sup>1</sup> just described and the newly developed methodological approach called *ethnography of performance*. The latter argues that social beings *perform* (Butler, 1990), at least in part, their subjectivities, identities, and desires in and through complex semiological languages, which include anything that cannot produce verbal utterances yet is ready to speak: the body, modes of dress, architecture, photography, and so on (see Barthes, 1967/1983; Halliday & Hasan, 1985). The research, which took place in an urban, French-language high school in southwestern Ontario, Canada, looks at the lives of a

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<sup>1</sup> Although I do not directly cite them, my work is greatly influenced by other critical discourses, especially postcolonial (see Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995) and cultural studies (see Grossberg, Nelson, & Treichler, 1992). In fact, I see this article as a hopeful inauguration of a long dialogic journey between the encompassing field of cultural studies and the fields of ESL, applied linguistics, and SLA.

group of continental Francophone African youths<sup>2</sup> and the formation of their social identity. Besides their youth and refugee status, their gendered and raced experience was vital in their *moments of identification*: that is, where and how they saw themselves reflected in the mirror of their society (see also Bhabha, 1994). Put otherwise, once in North America, I contend, these youths were faced with a *social imaginary* (Anderson, 1983) in which they were already Blacks. This social imaginary was directly implicated in how and with whom they identified, which in turn influenced what they linguistically and culturally learned as well as how they learned it. What they learned, I demonstrate, is *Black stylized English* (BSE), which they accessed in and through Black popular culture. They learned by taking up and repositioning the rap linguistic and musical genre and, in different ways, acquiring and rearticulating the hip-hop cultural identity.

BSE is Black English (BE) with style; it is a subcategory. BE is what Smitherman (1994) refers to as *Black talk*, which has its own grammar and syntax (see Labov, 1972). BSE, on the other hand, refers to ways of speaking that do not depend on a full mastery of the language. It banks more on *ritual expressions* (see Rampton, 1995, for the idea of rituality) such as *whassup* (what is happening), *whadap* (what is happening), *whassup my Nigger*, and *yo, yo homeboy* (very cool and close friend), which are performed habitually and recurrently in rap. The rituals are more an expression of politics, moments of identification, and desire than they are of language or of mastering the language per se. It is a way of saying, "I too am Black" or "I too desire and identify with Blackness."

By Black popular culture, on the other hand, I refer to films, newspapers, magazines, and more importantly music such as rap, reggae, pop, and rhythm and blues (R&B). The term *hip-hop* comprises everything from music (especially rap) to clothing choice, attitudes, language, and an approach to culture and cultural artifacts, positing and collaging them in an unsentimental fashion (Walcott, 1995, p. 5). More skeletally, I use hip-hop to describe a way of dressing, walking, and talking. The dress refers to the myriad shades and shapes of the latest *fly gear*: high-top sneakers, bicycle shorts, chunky jewelry, baggy pants, and polka-dotted tops (Rose, 1991, p. 277). The hairstyles, which include high-fade designs, dreadlocks, corkscrews, and braids (Rose, 1991, p. 277) are also part of this fashion. *The walk* usually means moving the fingers simultaneously with the head and the rest of the body as one is

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<sup>2</sup> By *continental African*, I mean Africans from the continent Africa, as opposed to *diasporic African* (the populace of African descent that does not live in Africa, e.g., African Americans). I use *youths* interchangeably with *students*, *boys*, *girls*, *males*, and *females*, given their arbitrary nature as a social construct.



walking. *The talk*, however, is BSE, defined above. Significantly, by patterning these behaviors African youths enter the realm of becoming Black. Hence, this article is about this process of becoming and how it is implicated in BSE learning.

In this process, the interlocking question of identification and desire is of particular interest. It asks the following: Who do we as social subjects living within a social space desire to be or to become? And whom do we identify with, and what repercussions does our identification have on how and what we learn? This question has already been dealt with in semiology (Barthes, 1967/1983; Eco, 1976; Gottdiener, 1995), psychoanalysis (Kristeva, 1974; Lacan, 1988), and cultural studies (Bhabha, 1994; Grossberg, Nelson, & Treichler, 1992; Hall, 1990; Mercer, 1994). I have not yet seen it raised, let alone incorporated seriously, in ESL and applied linguistics research. For instance, Goldstein (1987) focuses on the linguistic features of Black English as found in the speech of a group of Puerto Rican youths in New York City. However, she does not address the issue of what it means for Puerto Rican youths to learn Black English. What investment do they have in doing so? And what roles, if any, do race, desire, and identification have in the process of learning? Instead, Goldstein offers a very meticulous syntactico-morphological analysis. One approach does not rule out the other, but I strongly believe that it would be more fruitful for ESL pedagogy and that the nature of SLA would be better understood if both were located within a sociocultural context. Language, Bourdieu (1991) argues, has never been just an instrument of communication. It is also where power is formed and performed based on race, gender, sexuality, and social-class identity. My work differs from Goldstein's study in that it moves toward a cultural, political, and stylistic analysis.

In what follows, I discuss the research's guiding propositions, contentions, and questions and look at how I as the researcher am implicated in the research and the questions I ask. This is followed by a description of the methodology, site, and subject of my research. I then offer examples of African youths' speech in which BSE can be detected to demonstrate the interplay between subject formation, identification, and BESL learning. I also offer students' reflections and narratives on the impact of identification on becoming Black. Centralizing their everyday experience of identity, I conclude with some critical pedagogical (Corson, 1997; Peirce, 1989; Pennycook, 1994) and didactic propositions on the connections between investment, subjectivity, and ESL learning. Beginning with the premise that ESL learning is locality, I ask the following: If local identity is the site where we as teachers and researchers should start our praxis and research formulations (Morgan, 1997; Peirce, 1997; Rampton, 1995), then I would contend that any pedagogical input that

does not link the political, the cultural, and the social with identity and, in turn, with the process of ESL learning is likely to fail.

My central working contention was that, once in North America, continental African youths enter a *social imaginary*: a discursive space or a representation in which they are already constructed, imagined, and positioned and thus are treated by the hegemonic discourses and dominant groups, respectively, as Blacks. Here I address the White (racist) everyday communicative state of mind: "Oh, they all look like Blacks to me!" This positionality, which is offered to continental African youths through netlike praxis<sup>3</sup> in exceedingly complex and mostly subconscious ways, does not acknowledge the differences in the students' ethnicities, languages, nationalities, and cultural identities. Fanon (1967) sums up this netlike praxis brilliantly in writing about himself as a Black *Antillais* coming to the metropolis of Paris: "I am given no chance, I am overdetermined from without . . . . And *already* [italics added] I am being dissected under White eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed* [italics added]. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality" (p. 116).

In other words, continental African youths find themselves in a racially conscious society that, wittingly or unwittingly and through fused social mechanisms such as racisms and representations, asks them to racially fit somewhere. To fit somewhere signifies choosing or becoming aware of one's own being, which is partially reflected in one's language practice. Choosing is a question of agency; that is, by virtue of being a subject, one has room to maneuver one's own desires and choices. That is, although social subjects may count their desires and choices as their own, these choices are disciplined (Foucault, 1979) by the social conditions under which the subjects live. For example, to be Black in a racially conscious society, like the Euro-Canadian and U.S. societies, means that one is expected to be Black, act Black, and so be the marginalized Other (Hall, 1991; hooks, 1992). Under such disciplinary social conditions, as I will show, continental African youths express their moments of identification in relation to African Americans and African American cultures and languages, thus becoming Black. That they take up rap and hip-hop and speak BSE is by no means a coincidence. On the contrary, these actions are articulations of the youths' desire to belong to a location, a politics, a memory, a history, and hence a representation.

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<sup>3</sup> I understand *praxis* as a moment, a borderland of the intersection of discourse, action, and representations (Freire, 1970/1993, chap. 3). These representations and borderlands are mutually dependent and shoulder one another to create a web of meaning that can be deciphered only when all the strings are pulled together.

*Being* is being distinguished here from *becoming*. The former is an accumulative memory, an experience, and a conception upon which individuals interact with the world around them, whereas the latter is the process of building this conception. For example, as a continental African, I was not considered Black in Africa; other terms served to patch together my identity, such as *tall*, *Sudanese*, and *basketball player*. However, as a refugee in North America, my perception of self was altered in direct response to the social processes of racism and the historical representation of Blackness whereby the antecedent signifiers became secondary to my Blackness, and I retranslated myself: I became Black.

## METHOD

### Site

Between January and June 1996, I conducted a critical ethnographic research project<sup>4</sup> at Marie-Victorin (MV),<sup>5</sup> a small Franco-Ontarian intermediate and high school (Grades 7–13). MV had a school population of approximately 389 students from various ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. Although it is a French-language school, the language spoken by students in the school corridors and hallways was predominately English; Arabic, Somali, and Farsi were also spoken at other times. The school had 27 teachers, all of whom were White. The school archives show that until the beginning of the 1990s, students were also almost all White, except for a few students of African (read Black) and Middle Eastern descent.

For over 6 months, I attended classes at MV, talked to students, and observed curricular and extracurricular activities two or three times per week. Because of previous involvement in another project in the same school for almost 2 years, at the time of this research I was well acquainted with MV and its population, especially its African students, with whom I was able to develop a good relationship.

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<sup>4</sup> For Simon and Dippo (1986, p. 195), *critical ethnographic research* is a set of activities situated within a project that seeks and works its way towards social transformation. This project is political as well as pedagogical, and who the researcher is and what his or her racial, gender, and class embodiments are necessarily govern the research questions and findings. The project, then, according to Simon and Dippo, is “an activity determined both by real and present conditions, *and* certain conditions still to come which it is trying to bring into being” (p. 196). The assumption underpinning my project was based on the assertion that Canadian society is “inequitably structured and dominated by a hegemonic culture that suppresses a consideration and understanding of why things are the way they are and what must be done for things to be otherwise” (p. 196).

<sup>5</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

Being the only Black adult with the exception of one counselor and being a displaced subject, a refugee, and an African myself had given me a certain familiarity with the students' experiences. I was able to connect with different age and gender groups through a range of activities, initially "hanging out"<sup>6</sup> with the students and later playing sports with various groups. I was also approached by these students for both personal guidance and academic help. Because of my deep involvement in the student culture, at times my status as researcher was forgotten, and the line between the students and myself became blurred; clearly, we shared a safe space of comfort that allowed us to speak and engage freely. This research was as much about the youths themselves and their narration of their experiences as it was about my own; in most cases, the language itself was unnecessary to understand the plight of the youths and their daily encounters, both within MV and outside its walls.

Significantly, at the time of this research, students (or their parents) who were born outside Canada made up 70% of the entire school population at MV. Continental Africans constituted the majority within that figure and, indeed, within MV's population in general, although their numbers fluctuated slightly from year to year. However, with the exception of one temporary Black counselor, there was not one teacher or administrator of color at the school. Despite this fact, the school continued to emphasize the theme of unity within this multicultural and multiethnoracial population. The slogan that the school advertised, for instance, was *unité dans la diversité* (unity in diversity). This discourse of unity, however, remained at the level of abstraction and had little material bearing on the students' lives; it was the Frenchness of the school that seemed to be the capital of its promotion. That is, the French language, especially in Canada, represents a form of extremely important *symbolic capital*, which, according to Bourdieu (1991), can be the key for accessing *material capital*—jobs, business, and so on. Given their postcolonial educational history, most African youths in fact come to Franco-Ontarian schools already possessing a highly valued form of symbolic capital: *le français parisien* (Parisian French).

## Participants and Procedure

My research subjects encompassed these youths and part of a growing French-speaking continental African population in Franco-Ontarian

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<sup>6</sup> Staying somewhere to familiarize oneself with the place, its people, and their ways of being in that space. In the school, these sites are informal, such as hallways, the schoolyard, the school steps, the cafeteria, and the gymnasium, where the people in them are comfortable enough to speak their minds.

schools, which I refer to as *Black Franco-Ontarians*. Their numbers have grown exponentially since the beginning of the 1990s. The participants varied, first, in their length of stay in Canada (from 1–2 to 5–6 years); second, in their legal status (some were immigrants, but the majority were refugees); and, third, in their gender, class, age, linguistic, and national background. They came from places as diverse as Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), Djibouti, Gabon, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, and Togo. With no exception, all the African students in MV were at least trilingual, speaking English, French, and a mother tongue or L1,<sup>7</sup> with various (postcolonial) histories of language learning and degrees of fluency in each language.

On my return to MV in January 1996 to conduct my research, I spent the first month talking to and spending time with male and female African youths of different age groups, with their permission as well as their parents' and the school administration's. I attended classes, played basketball, volleyball, and indoor soccer, and generally spent time with the students. After a month, I chose 10 boys and 6 girls (see Table 1) for extensive ethnographic observation inside and outside the classroom and inside and outside the school and interviewed all 16. Of the 10 boys, 6 were Somali speakers (from Somalia and Djibouti), 1 was Ethiopian, 2 were Senegalese, and 1 was from Togo. Their ages ranged from 16 to 20 years. The 6 girls were all Somali speakers (also from Somalia and Djibouti), aged 14–18 years.

I conducted individual interviews as well as two focus-group interviews, one with the boys and one with the girls. All interviews were conducted on the school grounds, with the exception of the boys' focus-group interview, which took place in one of the student residences. The students chose the language in which the interviews were conducted: Some chose English, but the majority chose French. I translated these interviews into English. The only Black counselor and the former Black teacher were also interviewed. The interviews were closely transcribed and analyzed. I consulted school documents and archives and occasionally videotaped cultural and sport activities; on two occasions, I gave tape recorders to students in order to capture their interactions among themselves (Rampton, 1995).

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<sup>7</sup> *Mother tongue* is the first-acquired language whereas L1 is the language of greatest mastery. One's mother tongue can be one's L1, but one can also have an L1 that is not one's mother tongue. This is quite common in postcolonial situations.

TABLE 1  
Background of Participants Quoted in the Article

Name	Gender	Age	Grade	Country of origin	Other information
Amani	F	16	11	Somalia	Very active politically and culturally; organized Black History Month activities and wrote a theatrical play for the occasion; did not hesitate to speak her mind even before the highest official in the school's administration
Asma	F	16	11	Djibouti	Was considered one of the beauties of the school; was one of the school's most popular students; was proud of her mastery of French
Aziza	F	18	13	Somalia	Had a sister and two brothers at MV; came from a well-to-do, almost bourgeois family
Hassan	M	17	12	Djibouti	Although born in Ethiopia, presented himself as a Djiboutian as he grew up in Djibouti; was politically active; was considered by school administration and peers as an elder; received several social and academic awards
Jamal	M	18	12	Djibouti	Had dropped out of school for a period of time; at the time of the interview was holding a job while going to school part-time; was host of a local radio show airing rap in English and French
Juma	M	19	12	Senegal	Lived in the house where the focus-group interview with the boys was conducted; learned the Somali language by living with Somali students
Mukhi	M	19	12	Djibouti	Was quiet but held strong opinions; was one of the school's best basketball players
Najat	F	14	9	Djibouti	Came to Canada when she was 8 years old; lived with her single mother and her sister, who used to attend MV but transferred to an English-language school
Omer	M	18	12	Ethiopia	As an elder, spoke on behalf of African students before the school administration; was sought out for guidance by students
Sam	M	19	12	Djibouti	Had been at the school since Grade 7; was considered the "Michael Jordan" of the basketball team and "the rapper" of the school
Samira	F	16	11	Djibouti	Was popular; organized a fashion show
Shapir	M	17	12	Somalia	Had dropped out of school for one term; was taking advanced courses while enrolled in a co-op program

## FINDINGS

### Becoming Tri- or Multilingual: Sites and Sides of ESL Learning

Most Francophone African youths come to a Canadian English-speaking metropolis, such as Vancouver or Winnipeg, because their parents happen to have relatives in that city. I asked Hassan why his parents had considered moving to an English-speaking city as opposed to Quebec, a French-speaking province.

First of all, we had relatives who were here. Yes, secondly, because there is French and English. It is more the relative question because you know when you go to a new country, there is a tendency to go towards the people you know. Because you don't want to adventure in the unknown; and you can't have, you also want to get help, all the help possible to succeed better. (individual interview, French)<sup>8</sup>

In this context, in which English is the medium of everyday interaction, African youths are compelled or expected to speak English in order to be understood and in order to perform simple daily functions like negotiating public transport and buying groceries. In the following excerpt, Aziza recounts her early days, when her competence in speaking English was limited:

If I want to go to the boutique, I have to speak to the guy [she called him *monsieur*] in English because he doesn't speak French. If I go to the shop to buy clothes, I have to speak in English, you see. It is something that you have to do; you have to force yourself. In the early days, I used to go with my sister because my sister spoke English. So I always took her with me. Then I had to go by myself because she was not always going to be by my side. I had to speak, I had to learn to speak English so I can help myself, and I can you know, I can deal with anything, you see. So, in other words, you are obliged, it is something you can't escape from. Because the society is Anglophone, the country is Anglophone, the services are in English, you see, that's why. (individual interview, French)

For the youths, the inescapability of interacting in English translates into a will to learn English rapidly. Popular culture, especially television,

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<sup>8</sup> Each extract is followed by the type of interview (individual or group) and the language in which it was conducted. The following transcription conventions are used:

<u>underlined text</u>	English spoken within French speech or French spoken within English speech
[ ]	Explanation or description of speaker's actions
[. . .]	Text omitted

friendship, and peer pressure, all hasten the speed of learning. The African students felt peer pressure especially in their early days in the school, when they were denigrated for not speaking English. Franco-Ontarian students, Heller (1992, 1994) explains, use English in their everyday interaction, especially outside class. If African students want to participate in schoolwide as well as in- and out-of-class activities, they have no option but to learn English. Once learned, English becomes as much a source of pride as it is a medium of communication, as Asma explained:

If you don't speak English, like in my Grade 7, "Oh, she doesn't speak! Oh, we are sorry, you can explain to her, she doesn't understand English, *la petite*.<sup>9</sup> Can you?" They think that we are really stupid, that we are retarded, that we don't understand the language. Now I know English, I speak it all the time. I show them that I understand English [laughs], I show them that I do English. Oh, I got it, it gives me great pleasure.<sup>10</sup> (group interview, French)

Asma addresses, first, the teacher's condescending manner of speech on realizing that Asma did not speak English. Undoubtedly, this condescension leads to more pressure on Asma and African students in general to learn English. Secondly, her narrative addresses the threshold desire of a teenager who wants to fully participate in dominant markets and public spaces. Her inability to speak English, which would allow her to make friends, obstructs full participation. Yet making friends, and even learning English, is influenced by the popular imaginary, representation, and culture: television. I asked students in all of the interviews, "Où est-ce que vous avez appris votre anglais?" (Where did you learn English?). "Télévision," they all responded. However, within this *télévision* is a particular representation—Black popular culture—seems to *interpellate*<sup>11</sup> (Althusser, 1971) African youths' identity and identification. Because African youths have few African American friends and have limited daily contact with them, they access Black cultural identities and Black linguistic practice in and through Black popular culture, especially rap music videos, television programs, and Black films. Following is a response to my query about the last movies a student had seen:

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<sup>9</sup> A disparaging expression commonly used to patronize and belittle.

<sup>10</sup> In another context, Asma argued that one reason for wanting to speak English is that I didn't want people talking behind my back. I wanted to so badly learn English to show them that I could do it [laughs]. And to speak English like they do. And I am really really I'm happy I did that. I'm very proud of myself (group interview, French).

<sup>11</sup> The subconscious ways in which individuals, given their genealogical history and memory, identify with particular discursive spaces and representations and the way this identification participates hereafter in the social formation of the Subject (identity).



Najat: I don't know, I saw *Waiting to Exhale* and I saw what else I saw, I saw *Swimmer*, and I saw *Jumanji*; so wicked, all the movies. I went to *Waiting to Exhale* wid my boyfriend and I was like "men are rude" [laughs].

Awad: Oh believe me I know I know.

Najat: And den he [her boyfriend] was like, "no, women are rude." I was like we're like fighting you know and joking around. I was like, and de whole time like [laughs], and den when de woman burns the car, I was like, "go girl!" You know and all the women are like, "go girl!" you know? And den de men like khhh. I'm like, "I'm gonna go get me a popcorn" [laughs]. (individual interview, English)

Besides showing the influence of Black English in the use of *de*, *den*, *dat*, and *wicked* as opposed to, respectively, *the*, *then*, *that*, and *really really good*, Najat's answer shows that youths bring agency and social subjectivities to the reading of a text. These subjectivities, importantly, are embedded in history, culture, and memory. Two performed subjectivities that influenced Najat's reading of *Waiting to Exhale* were her race and gender identities. Najat identified with Blackness embodied in a female body; the Black/woman in burning her husband's car and clothes interpellates Najat.

Another example in a different context demonstrates the impact of Black popular culture on African students' lives and identities. Just before the focus-group interview with the boys, *Electric Circus*, a local television music and dance program that plays mostly Black music (rap/hip-hop, reggae, soul, and rhythm and blues) began. "Silence!" one boy requested in French. The boys started to listen attentively to the music and watch the fashions worn by the young people on the program. After the show, the boys code switched among French, English, and Somali as they exchanged observations on the best music, the best dance, and the cutest girl. Rap and hip-hop music and the corresponding dress were obviously at the top of the list.

The moments of identification in the above examples are significant in that they point to the process of identity formation that is implicated in turn in the linguistic norm to be learned. The Western hegemonic representations of Blackness, Hall (1990) shows, are negative and tend to work alongside historical and subconscious memories that facilitate their interpretations by members of the dominant groups. Once African youths encounter these negative representations, they look for Black cultural and representational forms as sites for positive identity formation and identification (Kelly, 1998). An important aspect of identification is that it works over a period of time and at the subconscious level. In the following excerpt, Omer addresses the myriad ways in which African youths are influenced by Black representations.

Black Canadian youths are influenced by the Afro-Americans. You watch for hours, you listen to Black music, you watch Black comedy, Mr. T,<sup>12</sup> the *Rap City*, there you will see singers who dress in particular ways. You see, so. (individual interview, French)

Mukhi explored the contention of identification by arguing that

We identify ourselves more with the Blacks of America. But, this is normal, this is genetic. We can't, since we live in Canada, we can't identify ourselves with Whites or country music, you know [laughs]. We are going to identify ourselves on the contrary with people of our color, who have our lifestyle, you know. (group interview, French)

Mukhi evokes biology and genetic connection as a way of relating to Black America, and his identification with it is clearly stated. For all the students I spoke to, this identification was certainly connected to their inability to relate to dominant groups, the public spaces they occupied, and their cultural forms and norms. Black popular culture emerged as an alternative site not only for identification but also for language learning.

“A’ait, Q7 in the House!”<sup>13</sup>

For the students I interviewed, rap was an influential site for language learning. The fact that rap linguistic performance was more prevalent in the boys’ narratives than in the girls’ raises the question of the role of gender in the process of identification and learning.

On many occasions, the boys performed typical gangster rap language and style, using language as well as movement, including name calling. What follows are just two of the many occasions on which students articulated their identification with Black America through the recitation of rap linguistic styles.

Sam: One two, one two, mic check. A’ait [aayet], a’ait, a’ait.

Juma: This is the rapper, you know wha ’m meaning? You know wha ’m saying?

Sam: Mic mic mic; mic check. A’ait you wanna test it? Ah, I’ve the microphone you know; a’ait.

Sam: [laughs] I don’t rap man, c’mon give me a break. [laughs] Yo! A’ait a’ait you know, we just about to finish de tape and all dat. Respect to

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<sup>12</sup> Host of a local rap music television program called *Rap City*, which airs mostly U.S. rap lyrics.

<sup>13</sup> *A’ait* = all right; *Q7* = the clique to which the students belong; *in the house* = present.

my main man [pointing to me]. So, you know, you know wha 'm mean, 'm just represen'in Q7. One love to Q7 you know wha 'm mean and all my friends back to Q7 . . . Stop the tapin' boy!

Jamal: Kim Juma, live! Put the lights on. Wardap. [students talking in Somali] Peace out, wardap, where de book. Jamal 'am outa here.

Shapir: Yo, this is Shapir. I am trying to say peace to all my Niggers, all my bitches from a background that everybody in the house. So, yo, chill out and this is how we gonna kick it. Bye and with that pie. All right, peace yo.

Sam: A'ait, this is Sam represen'in AQA [. . .] where it's born, represen'in you know wha 'm mean? I wanna say whassup to all my Niggers, you know, peace and one love. You know wha 'm mean, Q7 represen'in for ever. Peace! [rap music]

Jamal: [as a DJ] Crank it man, coming up. [rap music] (group interview, English)

Of interest in these excerpts is the use of BSE, particularly the language of rap: “respect to my main man,” “represen'in Q7,” “peace out, wardap,” “‘am outa here,” “I am trying to say peace to all my Niggers, all my bitches,” “so, yo, chill out and this is how we gonna kick it,” “I wanna say whassup to all my Niggers,” “peace and one love.” On the other hand, when Shapir offers “peace to all” his “Niggers,” all his “bitches,” he is first reappropriating the word *Nigger* as an appellation that is common in rap/hip-hop culture. That is, friends, especially young people, commonly call a Black friend *Nigger* without its traditional racist connotation. Second, however, Shapir is using the sexist language that might exist in rap (Rose, 1991). These forms of sexism have been challenged by female rappers like Queen Latifa and Salt-N-Pepa and were critiqued by female and male students. For example, Samira expressed her dismay at the sexist language found in some rap circles:

OK, hip-hop, yes I know that everyone likes hip-hop. They dress in a certain way, no? The songs go well. But, they are really really, they have expressions like fuck, bitches, etc. Sorry, but there is representation. (group interview, French)

Here, Samira addresses the impact that these expressions might have on the way society at large perceives the Black female body, which in turn influences how it is represented both inside and outside, rap/hip-hop culture. Hassan as well expressed his disapproval of this abusive language: “Occasionally, rap has an inappropriate language for the life in which we live, a world of violence and all that” (individual interview, French).

In rap style, one starts a performance by “checking the mic”: “One two, one two, mic check.” Then the rapper either recites an already

composed lyric or otherwise “kicks a freestyle,” displaying the spontaneity that characterizes rap. The rapper begins the public performance by introducing herself or himself with a true or made-up name (“Yo, this is Shafir”) and thanking her or his “main man,” or best friend, who often introduces the rapper to the public. Specific to gangster rap, one represents not only oneself but a web of geophysical and metaphorical spaces and collectivities that are demarcated by people and territorial spaces: “represen’in Q7,” “a’ait, this is Sam represen’in AQA.” At the end of the performance, when the recitation or freestyle is completed, again one thanks the “main man” and “gives peace out” or “shad out” (shouts out) to the people.

The boys were clearly influenced by rap lyrics, syntax, and morphology (in their broader semiological sense), especially by gangster rap. In learning ESL in general and BSE in particular through music, Jamal used significant strategies, including listening, reading, and repeating: He was listening to the tunes and lyrics while reading and following the written text. Acting as a DJ, he then repeated not only the performer’s words and expressions but also his accent.

Depending on their age, the girls, on the other hand, had an ambivalent relationship with rap, although they used the same strategies as Jamal in learning English through music. For example, during a picnic organized by a group of males and females, the females listened to music while following the written text and reciting it (complete with accents) along with the singer. The girls’ choice of music (including songs performed by Whitney Houston and Toni Braxton) differed in that it was softer than that chosen by the boys and contained mostly romantic themes.

For the most part, the older females (16–18 years old) tended to be more eclectic than the younger ones in how they related to hip-hop and rap. Their eclecticism was evident in how they dressed and in what language they learned. Their dress was either elegant middle class, partially hip-hop, or traditional, and their learned language was what Philip (1991) calls *plain Canadian English*. The younger females (12–14 years old), on the other hand, like the boys, dressed in hip-hop style and performed BSE.

In spite of their ambivalent relationship to rap and hip-hop, I detected the following three features of BE in both the older and the younger girls’ speech:

1. the absence of the auxiliary *be* (19 occasions, e.g., “they so cool” and “I just laughing” as opposed to *they are so cool* and *I am just laughing*);
2. BE negative concord (4 occasions; e.g., “all he [the teacher] cares about is his daughter you know. If somebody just dies or if I decide to

shoot somebody you know, he is *not* doing *nothing* [italics added]”; the expression would be considered incorrect in standard English because of the double negative); and

3. the distributive *be* (4 occasions, e.g., “I be saying dis dat you know?” or “He be like ‘Oh, *elle va être bien*’ [she’s going to be fine]”).

These BE markers are both expressions of the influence of Black talk on the girls’ speech and performances of the girls’ identity location and desire, which they apparently ally with Blackness. (For a description of BE features, see Goldstein, 1987; Labov, 1972.)

## Performing Acts of Desire

I have identified rap and hip-hop as influential sites in African students’ processes of becoming Black, which in turn affected what and how the students learned. Their narratives also show that the youths were quite cognizant of their identification with Blackness and the impact of race on their choices. In the following conversation, Mukhi reflected on the impact of rap (as just one among many other Black popular cultural forms) on his life and the lives of those around him:

Awad: But do you listen to rap, for example? I noticed that there are a number of students who listen to rap eh? Is . . .

Sam: It is not just us who listen to rap, everybody listens to rap. It is new.

Awad: But do you think that that influences how you speak, how . . .

Mukhi: *How we dress, how we speak, how we behave* [italics added]. (group interview, English)

The linguistic patterns and dress codes that Mukhi addresses are accessed and learned by African youths through Black popular culture. As I have noted, these patterns and codes do not require mastery and fluency. Indeed, they are performative acts of desire and identification. As Amani contended,

We have to wonder why we try to really follow the model of the Americans who are Blacks. Because *when you search for yourself, search for identification, you search for someone who reflects you, with whom you have something in common* [italics added]. (group interview, French)

Hassan supported Amani as follows:

Hassan: Yes yes, African students are influenced by rap and hip-hop because they want to, yes, they are influenced probably a bit more because it is the desire to belong may be.

Awad: Belong to what?

Hassan: To a group, belong to a society, to have a model/fashion [he used the term *un modele*]; you know, the desire to mark oneself, the desire to make, how do I say it? To be part of a rap society, you see. It is like getting into rock and roll or heavy metal. (individual interview, French)

Hence, *one invests where one sees oneself mirrored*. Such an investment includes linguistic as well as cultural behavioral patterns. In an individual interview, Hassan told me it would be unrealistic to expect to see Blackness allied with rock and roll or heavy metal, as they are socially constructed as White music. On the other hand, he argued emphatically that African youths had every reason to invest in basketball—which is constructed as a Black sport—but not hockey, for example.

## CONCLUSION: IDENTITY, DISCIPLINE, AND PEDAGOGY

Analogously, the desire on the part of African youths, particularly the boys, to invest (Peirce, 1997) in basketball is no different from their desire to learn BESL. Learning is hence neither aimless nor neutral, nor is it free of the politics of identity. As I have shown, an L2 learner can have a marginalized linguistic norm as a target. But why would these youths choose the margin as a target? What is their investment and politics in doing so? And what role, if any, do race, gender (sexuality), and differences in social class play in their choices? In other words, if youths come to the classrooms as embodied subjectivities that are embedded in history and memory (Dei, 1996), should we as teachers not couple their word with their world (Freire, 1970/1993)?

Clearly, my perspective is an interdisciplinary one that may have raised more questions than it has satisfactorily answered. However, my intention has been to ask new questions that link identity, pedagogy, politics, investment, desire, and the process of ESL learning by borrowing from cultural studies. I have discussed how a group of continental African youths were becoming Black, which meant learning BESL. Becoming Black, I have argued, was an identity signifier produced by and producing the very process of BESL. To become Black is to become an ethnographer who translates and looks around in an effort to understand what it means to be Black in Canada, for example. In becoming Black, the African youths were interpellated by Black popular cultural forms, rap and hip-hop, as sites of identification. Gender, however, was as important as race in what was being chosen and translated, and by whom and how it was chosen and translated.

Choosing the margin, I emphasize, is simultaneously an act of investment, an expression of desire, and a deliberate counterhegemonic undertaking. The choice of rap especially must be read as an act of

resistance. Historically, rap has been formed as a voice for voicelessness and performed as a prophetic language that addresses silence, the silenced, and the state of being silenced. It explores the hopes and the human, political, historical, and cultural experience of the *Black Atlantic* (Gilroy, 1993). As Jamal argued,

Black Americans created rap to express themselves; how do I say it? Their ideas, their problems, [and] if we could integrate ourselves into it, it is because rappers speak about or they have the same problems we have. (individual interview, French)

Such problems may include human degradation, police brutality, and everyday racism (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992; Essed, 1991).

If learning is an engagement of one's identity, a fulfillment of personal needs and desires (of being), and an investment in what is yet to come, any proposed ESL pedagogy, research, or praxis that fails to culminate in these will quite obviously not draw in the youths described in this article and is therefore bound to be unsuccessful, if not plainly damaging. Identity, as re- and preconfigured here, governs what ESL learners acquire and how they acquire it. What is learned linguistically is not and should not be dissociable from the political, the social, and the cultural. Hence, to learn is to invest in something (e.g., BESL) that has a personal or a particular significance to who one is or what one has become. Because language is never neutral, learning it cannot and should not be either. Thus we as teachers must, first, identify the different sites in which our students invest their identities and desires and, second, develop materials that engage our students' raced, classed, gendered, sexualized, and abled identities.

I therefore identify and propose rap and hip-hop (and Black popular culture in general) as curriculum sites where learning takes place and where identities are invested. In the language of antiracism education (Dei, 1996; hooks, 1994), this proposition is, on the one hand, a call to centralize and engage marginalized subjects, their voices, and their ways of being and learning and, on the other, a revisit to this question: In the case of African youths, whose language and identity are we as TESOL professionals teaching and assuming in the classroom if we do not engage rap and hip-hop? That is, whose knowledge is being valorized and legitimated and thus assumed to be worthy of study, and whose knowledge and identity are left in the corridors of our schools? To identify rap and hip-hop as curriculum sites in this context is to legitimize otherwise illegitimate forms of knowledge. As Bourdieu (1991) shows, wittingly or unwittingly, schools sanction certain identities and accept their linguistic norm by doing nothing more than assuming them

to be the norm; we as teachers should remember that these identities are raced, classed, sexualized, and gendered.

However, because rap and hip-hop are also historical and social productions, they are as much sites of critique as they are sites of hope. As noted, rap and hip-hop are not immune to, for example, sexism (and homophobia; see also Rose, 1991). Therefore, they should not be readily consumed but should be critically framed, studied, and engaged with. To be able to do so, however, teachers need first to be in tune with popular culture, for television, music, newspapers, and other media—not the classroom—are increasingly the sources from which students learn English. Second, teachers who are unfamiliar with popular culture should engage the Freireian notion of *dialecticism*, in which their students can become their teachers. In practical terms, this might mean planning activities in which students explain to the teacher and to the rest of the class what rap and hip-hop are and what they represent to the students.

Rap and hip-hop are also sites of hope and possibility: the hope that all learners (from dominant groups or others) can be introduced to and be able to see multiple ways of speaking, being, and learning. In the case of African students, in particular, rap and hip-hop are sites of identification and investment. To introduce them in the classroom, to paraphrase Freire (1970/1993), is to hope to link their world, identities, and desires with their word. To put it more broadly, maybe the time has come to close the split between minority students' identities and the school curriculum and between those identities and classroom pedagogies, subjects, and materials.

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# Sexual Identities in ESL: Queer Theory and Classroom Inquiry

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Within ESL, interest has been growing in the pedagogical implications of poststructuralist theories of identity and in the need for gay-friendly teaching practices. However, research on identity has largely neglected the domain of sexual identity, and efforts to develop gay-friendly pedagogies have not yet engaged with poststructuralism. This article introduces some of the key concepts of queer theory, which draws on poststructuralism, and suggests implications for teaching. The central argument is that a queer theoretical framework may be more useful pedagogically than a lesbian and gay one because it shifts the focus from inclusion to inquiry, that is, from including minority sexual identities to examining how language and culture work with regard to all sexual identities. This article then comments on an ESL class discussion in the United States that focused on lesbian and gay identities.

## Speculations and Conclusions

*Directions:* For each situation below, think of 3 or 4 different possibilities to explain what is occurring.

Example: Those boys are hitting each other!

*They must be fighting.*

*Or, they could be playing around.*

*They might be pretending to hit each other.*

. . .

3. Those two women are walking arm in arm.

[“They could be loving  
each other.”

“They could be lovers.”

“They could be lesbians.”

“They can be very friendly.”

“They could be mother  
and daughter.”

“They could be sisters.”]<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From a worksheet with seven scenarios, including “When Judy comes to my house for dinner, she never finishes her food” and “I told my student that her necklace was beautiful, and she gave it to me!” Sentences in brackets are oral responses from the students.

Within English language education, there has been a growing interest in poststructuralist theories of identity and what they imply for teaching and learning (see the special-topic issue of *TESOL Quarterly* on language and identity, Vol. 31, No. 3, 1997; Peirce, 1995; see also Pennycook, 1994; Rampton, 1994). Yet within professional publications the domain of sexual identity has been largely overlooked. (In this article the term *sexual identity* is used primarily to suggest parallels with other work on identity in language education but also to avoid the debates of causality implicit in the terms *sexual preference* [choice] and *sexual orientation* [innateness].) Rare mentions include Littlejohn and Windeatt's (1989) call for teaching materials to be evaluated in terms of, among other things, heterosexism and McNamara's (1997) references to gay and lesbian students and teachers, and to queer theory's reappropriation of the word *queer*.

At conferences and in newsletters, however, TESOL practitioners have shown considerable interest in making learning environments and teaching practices more gay friendly. The broad objective of gay-friendly pedagogies is to make classroom work more relevant to more learners—namely, those who

- identify themselves as lesbian, bisexual, or gay;
- interact with gay-identified people at work, at school, at home, or on the street;
- encounter lesbian or gay issues simply by watching television or reading a magazine (see Mittler & Blumenthal, 1994).

Educational organisations like TESOL have appointed task forces and formed committees to provide leadership and generate scholarship on how to make language education more effective and more equitable with respect to people of every sexual identity (see Cummings & Nelson, 1993; Nelson, 1993b).

Some analysts (see, e.g., Brems & Strauss, 1995; Hirst, 1981; Nelson, 1993a) have argued that homophobia (a prejudice) and heterosexism (systematic discrimination) can adversely affect learning and teaching and therefore need to be addressed within the classroom, the educational institution, and the profession at large. In class and on campus, any learner or teacher—not just those who identify themselves as straight—should be free to decide how open they wish to be about their own sexual identity without fear of incrimination (Destandau, Nelson, & Snelbecker, 1995; Kappra, 1998/1999; Nelson, 1991, 1992a, 1992b; Snelbecker, 1994). Practitioners in both ESL (Carscadden, Nelson, & Ward, 1992; Jones & Jack, 1994) and EFL (Neff, 1992; Summerhawk, 1998) have offered practical suggestions for making curricula and materials more gay inclusive. In some commercial teaching materials, references to lesbian or gay issues are being integrated within discussions

of families or social discrimination (see Clarke, Dobson, & Silberstein, 1996; Thewlis, 1997).

Despite these efforts, some colleagues are puzzled, even perturbed, by the idea that lesbian or gay identities could have any relevance to language learning. To them, gay-friendly teaching is at best of marginal importance, of interest only to a small minority of learners and teachers (gay ones), and at worst invasive, inserting a discourse of (homo)sex into a field in which that discourse is neither relevant nor appropriate.<sup>2</sup> These colleagues do not always recognise that sexual identity is already an integral part of ESL. "Husband, wife, wedding ring . . . anniversaries, in-laws, boy/girl friend: all are the currency of everyday social intercourse for the heterosexual" (Harris, 1990, p. 103), but are these references to sexual identity perceived as such? References to gay relationships, customs, or characters may be more likely to be seen as signifying sexual identity (and even sexual behaviour, as gay-identified people are often hypersexualised; see Hinson, 1996).<sup>3</sup> Other colleagues find the notion of gay-friendly teaching appealing but feel they lack the requisite support, resources, or know-how to proceed (see Jones, 1993, as cited in Snelbecker, 1994, p. 110), which is not surprising given the current dearth of research on sexual identities in classroom practice. This article is part of a larger research project that looks at how the topic of lesbian or gay identities comes up in ESL classes, what choices or challenges arise, and what strategies are helpful in dealing with them. The aim is to suggest pedagogical implications.

If there is no practice without theory (Belsey, 1980), then it is necessary to consider the theoretical underpinnings that inform classroom practice. Thus far, calls for gay-friendly pedagogies have drawn on a lesbian and gay identity framework, which aims to legitimate subordinate sexual identities. Although a lesbian and gay framework has been very useful politically in mobilising for civil rights, it may be less useful pedagogically.<sup>4</sup> This article proposes that queer theory, an emerging body of work that draws on poststructuralist theories of identity, may be of practical use in both explaining why gay-friendly teaching practices are important and suggesting how such practices might be accomplished. Queer theory shifts the focus from gaining civil rights to analysing discursive and cultural practices, from affirming minority sexual identities to problematising all sexual identities. Pedagogies of inclusion thus become pedagogies of inquiry (following Nelson, 1998).

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<sup>2</sup> These views have been the subject of debate in *TESOL Matters* (see Anderson et al., 1997).

<sup>3</sup> For example, a casual reference to a man's wife is unlikely to be associated with either sexual identity or sexuality, but any mention of a man's male partner is likely to be associated with both.

<sup>4</sup> This is not meant to imply that pedagogical practices are not political (or that doing politics does not involve teaching).

This article addresses the following questions:

1. How are sexual identities theorised according to queer theory?
2. What does queer theory imply for classroom practice?
3. What did this researcher find noteworthy while observing an ESL class discussion in which the topic of lesbian and gay identities came up?
4. How can classroom practice be analysed with queer theory in mind?

## SEXUAL IDENTITIES IN QUEER THEORY

During the 1960s and 1970s, in the United States and elsewhere, a lesbian and gay movement and cultural community developed that countered the widespread invisibility and denigration of “homosexuals” with messages of unity, pride, and equality. A major focus of this movement, following other identity-based movements for civil rights, has been establishing legislation that prohibits discrimination—in this case, based on sexual identity. The theoretical basis unifying the lesbian and gay movement has been the notion that lesbian identity, or gay identity, is a stable attribute, a universal essence. (For a more detailed account of this period and the theoretical complexities of *essentialism* [identity-as-essence] and *social constructionism* [identity-as-social construct], see Seidman, 1993, 1995.)

But with poststructuralism came “the troubling of identity” (Seidman, 1995, p. 117). Identities began to be theorised not as facts but as acts (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985), not attributes but positionings (Hall, 1990), not essences but strategies (Spivak, 1990), not “museum pieces or clinical specimens” but “works in progress” (Phelan, 1994, p. 41). Lesbian and gay identity theory began to seem too fixed and narrow to account for a diverse range of sexual identities (including bisexuality and transgenderalism), relationship types, sexual practices and values, multiple identities, and responses to AIDS. In the 1980s and 1990s the theoretical and practical challenges to identity politics led to the emergence of queer theory and activism (Seidman, 1995). The word *queer*, once a term of derision, has been reappropriated and is now used, somewhat paradoxically, in two different ways. *Queer* serves to protest, or at least blur, clear-cut notions of sexual identity, but it also can be used as shorthand for the somewhat lengthy phrase *lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgenderal* (Warner, 1993).

## Not Facts But Acts

According to queer theory, sexual identities are not facts but acts; that is, they are not what people are but what they do (Butler, 1990), and central to the “doing” of sexual identity is discourse (following Foucault, 1980/1990). Queer theory draws on the linguistic concept of *performativity*—that utterances act on the world rather than just describe it—in arguing that sexual identity is performed rather than expressed (Butler, 1990, drawing on Austin, 1962). This concurs with linguistic work that theorises social identities as “communicatively produced” (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982, p. 1), that is, not preexisting language but “in large part established and maintained through language” (p. 7). It follows that interacting socially and discursively involves producing and interpreting sexual identities.

## Culturally Significant

It is not just people who identify as lesbian or gay who are engaged in producing and interpreting sexual identities. Whereas lesbian and gay theory focuses primarily on lesbian and gay people, queer theory is interested in how the “homo/heterosexual definition” shapes the lives of people “across the spectrum of sexualities” (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 1). Queer theory takes what Sedgwick calls a “universalizing view,” which sees the defining binary of “homo/heterosexual” as potentially relevant to anyone, in contrast to a “minoritizing view” (p. 1) that sees the binary as relevant only to a fixed minority (gay people).

But, according to queer theory, the straight/gay defining binary does more than shape sexual identities. It constitutes a category of knowledge as significant as masculine/feminine or bourgeois/proletariat, at least within the discourses and cultural practices of what Sedgwick (1990) refers to (rather vaguely) as *the West*. So the straight/gay binary is broadly relevant not only because it shapes dominant as well as subordinate sexual identities but also because it shapes ways of thinking and living. Furthermore, both the degree of importance associated with sexual identities and the ways in which they are produced and interpreted are not universal but vary according to the cultural context (see Livia & Hall, 1997).

## Necessary but Problematic

Queer theorists thus see sexual identities as central rather than peripheral to cultural practices and discourses. But they do not see



sexual identities as straightforward or even desirable. Queer theorists point out that even though producing sexual identities is necessary, it is also, in some sense, “impossible” (Hall, 1996, p. 16).<sup>5</sup> For one thing, it is difficult to separate sexual identity from other acts of identity because identities are not just multiple but mutually inflecting. In other words, sexual identity is experienced (or accomplished) in “a particular class-, race-, or gender-mediated way, and only so” (Seidman, 1993, pp. 136–137); likewise, cultural identity, for example, is mediated by sexual identity (see Mac an Ghaill, 1994, p. 165).

Furthermore, queer theorists caution, sexual identities can exclude as well as include, limit as well as liberate (Fuss, 1991). Solidifying fluid sexualities into fixed sexual identities that can then be taxonomised may have more to do with social control than with empowerment. After all, the purpose of the straight/gay binary is not merely to describe sexual identities but to regulate them; in other words, the binary is not neutral but normative (that is, *heteronormative*; Warner, 1993).

So although a lesbian and gay approach calls for appreciating, or at least tolerating, sexual identity diversity, a queer approach problematises the very notion of sexual identities. Whereas a lesbian and gay approach challenges prejudicial attitudes (homophobia) and discriminatory actions (heterosexism) on the grounds that they violate human rights, a queer approach looks at how discursive acts and cultural practices manage to make heterosexuality, and only heterosexuality, seem normal or natural (heteronormativity).

## USING QUEER THEORY FOR CLASSROOM INQUIRY

Thus far, efforts to integrate gay issues into ESL/EFL have been based on a lesbian and gay identity framework. In terms of classroom practice, the central focus has been developing what Britzman (1995) calls “pedagogies of inclusion,” which aim to introduce “authentic images of gays and lesbians” (p. 158) into curricula and materials. But inclusion, however well intended, can be problematic for a number of reasons. How is “a lesbian” to be represented in curricula or materials? Which characters or characteristics will be included, which excluded? If these representations come only from the target culture, are they sufficiently inclusive? Will teachers, teacher educators, and material developers have the knowledge to be able to include sexual minorities? Will students consider such inclusions relevant to their own lives and to their needs as

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<sup>5</sup> Sexual identities have been called “necessary fictions” (Weeks, 1991, p. 155) and “necessary errors” (Butler, 1991, p. 16).

language learners? After inclusive references are made, what happens next? Who decides?

Another potential difficulty with inclusion is that its underlying purpose may be legitimation, or the inclusion of lesbian and gay identities so that they can become more acceptable to the majority (see Britzman, 1995; Misson, 1996). But the goal of legitimation may be problematic. Ironically, to legitimate one must first delegitimize—in other words, aiming for tolerance presupposes intolerance. Only two possible positions are created—to be either tolerant or tolerated (Britzman, 1995). Thus an emphasis on including minorities can serve, however unintentionally, to reinforce their minority status.

In contrast, pedagogies of inquiry based on queer theory shift the focus from learning about (or learning to accept) lesbian, gay, and bisexual people to analysing how language and culture work with regard to all sexual identities. An inquiry approach, informed by queer theory, might involve

- acknowledging that the domain of sexual identity may be important to a range of people for a range of reasons;
- examining not only subordinate sexual identities but also the dominant one(s);
- looking at divergent ways of producing and “reading” sexual identities in various cultural contexts and discourses;
- identifying prevailing, competing, and changing cultural norms that pertain to sexual identities;
- exploring problematic and positive aspects of this identity domain;
- considering sexual identity in relation to other acts of identity and vice versa.

For a number of reasons, queer theory may provide a more flexible, open-ended framework for facilitating inquiry, particularly within the intercultural context of ESL, than lesbian and gay identity theory does. Even though advocating for marginalised identities could at times be necessary in the classroom, as an approach to teaching it may be somewhat limited. On a practical level, inquiry may be more doable than inclusion because teachers are expected not to have all the answers but rather to frame questions, facilitate investigations, and explore what is not known. Queer-informed inquiry also has the advantage of allowing for a range of sexual identities to be referred to or discussed throughout curricula rather than only in relation to certain so-called gay topics. In terms of engaging learners and teachers whose experiences and viewpoints are diverse, a focus on analysis may be more effective than a focus on advocacy. Furthermore, a queer approach recognises that sexual identities are not universal but are done in different ways in different

cultural contexts, and it calls for a close look at how identities are produced through day-to-day interactions.

Instead of trying to make subordinate sexual identities seem natural or normal (in fact, they do not seem so to many people), a queer approach to pedagogy asks how linguistic and cultural practices manage to naturalise certain sexual identities but not others. In other words, the issue is not whether a particular sexual identity is natural but how it has been made to seem natural (or unnatural) (in the tradition of Michel Foucault, not what the truth is but how effects of truth are produced). Instead of sidestepping or smoothing over the complexities that inevitably accompany acts of identity, a queer approach makes these problematic aspects the very site of learning. The point is not to abandon efforts to include lesbian and gay characters or issues because of the difficulties of representation, nor to choose between the constructive and the constraining aspects of identity, but to make these tensions a central focus of investigation.

The following sample questions for class discussion illustrate what the theoretical discussion above might mean in practical terms. Questions like these (presented here as proposals rather than prescriptions; Littlejohn, 1992, p. 284) could be used in conjunction with specific, problematic situations, or *codes* (see Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1987, drawing on Paulo Freire).

- In this country, what do people do or say (or not do or say) if they want to be seen as gay [lesbian] [straight]?
- How is this different in another country? How is it similar?
- Why do people sometimes want to be seen as straight [bisexual] [lesbian]? Why do they sometimes not want to?
- Why do people sometimes want to be able to identify others as straight [gay] [bisexual]? When is it important to know this about someone? When is it not important at all?
- Is it easy to identify someone as gay [straight] [lesbian]? Why or why not? Does it make a difference if the person is old or young, a man or a woman, someone you know or someone you only observe? What other things can make it easier or more difficult?
- Are there people who think their sexual identity is more [less] important than another part of their identity? Explain.
- In this country [in this city] [on this campus], which sexual identities seem natural or acceptable? Which do not? How can you tell?
- After people move to this country, do they change how they think about sexual identities? If so, how? If not, why not?

Lines of inquiry like these may be beneficial for a number of reasons. They encourage learners and teachers to question what may appear factual, and they allow for—and may even pedagogically exploit—multiple perspectives and diverging knowledges (Candlin, 1989; Kumara-vadivelu, 1994). Looking at how sexual identities are done or accomplished encourages participants to demystify potentially unfamiliar aspects of the target language and culture, but without reductively constructing the culture as homogeneous or unchanging. Also, considering more than one cultural context helps specify rather than universalise what it means to identify (or be identified) as bisexual, lesbian, or straight.

Most importantly, the questions outlined above serve to remind learners and teachers that identities are, after all, not truths, facts, or things but theoretical constructs that “arise at specific times, in specific places, to do specific work” (Poynton, 1997, p. 17). Considering the various purposes identities serve may help learners (and teachers) negotiate them more strategically.

## OBSERVING AN ESL CLASS

When the topic of lesbian or gay identities is raised in an ESL class, what sorts of choices and challenges do teachers face as they attempt to facilitate classroom inquiry? To address this question, I visited a grammar-based class at a community college and a speaking/listening class and an academic writing class at two different universities. Participating teachers were selected on the bases of the following criteria: (a) They had at least 6 years’ teaching experience; (b) they were interested in sexual identities in ESL and had previously worked with the topic of lesbian and gay identities in the classroom; (c) they thought it likely that this topic would come up in their current classes; and (d) they were currently teaching at an intermediate or advanced level, which meant their students could be interviewed in English. With the teachers’ and students’ permission, I observed each of the three classes for 2 consecutive weeks, collected worksheets and students’ written work, and conducted interviews with the teachers and about half of the students. (I told the students I was studying “identities in ESL” as I did not want to introduce the topic of sexual identities.) I also facilitated one focus group at a TESOL convention and three focus groups with teachers at one of the universities where I had observed a class. This article draws only on field notes and the transcript from one class discussion (following Nelson in Candlin, Janks, Nelson, Norton, & O’Loughlin, 1998).

## The Class

The teacher, Roxanne,<sup>6</sup> whose L1 is (American) English, had 20 years' experience teaching ESL and EFL. Her grammar-based ESL class met for 2 hours each day at a community college in the United States. The college was located in a gay neighbourhood in a city where discrimination based on sexual identity is illegal in areas such as housing and employment. At the time of this lesson, a flier advertising a local lesbian and gay rights event was posted near the classroom. The 26 students were immigrants and refugees from 13 countries in Africa, Central and South America, and Asia; half were women, half men; and their ages ranged from early 20s to early 70s. They had been living in the United States a few months to a few years, and although many were currently working, most intended further study.

## The Discussion

One month into the course, Roxanne passed out a worksheet that she had written for homework as part of a unit on modal verbs in English (see the excerpt at the beginning of this article). The next day, the students discussed their written answers in small groups. When Roxanne reconvened the whole class and invited questions about the worksheet, a lively discussion of Scenario 3—"Those two women are walking arm in arm"—ensued. While observing this discussion I was struck by a heightened sense of unpredictability—at any given moment, the discussion might deepen, become confronting, or be suddenly brought to a close—and, paradoxically, by a sense of calm routine—as in other discussions in this class, about half of the students spoke, but all seemed attentive, and the atmosphere felt pleasant, studious, ordinary.

What follows is the transcript of 3 minutes from the 15-minute class discussion of "Those two women are walking arm in arm" as well as my thoughts while observing (in italics). This commentary involves moment-to-moment speculations and judgments rather than careful analysis and argumentation, an unusual choice that has its limitations. The commentary was necessarily written retrospectively, and it raises more questions than it answers, as many of the speculations cannot be confirmed by observable evidence. Nonetheless, I hope to highlight some of the challenging choices teachers (and learners) may face when dealing with this topic and to do so in a way that may be meaningful to a range of readers (see Bailey & Nunan, 1996) while acknowledging the

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<sup>6</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

particularity of my own perspectives, interests, and limitations as researcher (see Lather, 1991).

The focus of the class discussion is first on grammar, namely, whether the continuous tense is appropriate in “They could be loving each other.” When one student suggests, “They could be lesbians,” the meaning, spelling, and pronunciation of *lesbians* are clarified.<sup>7</sup> Then the teacher shifts the discussion off grammar with such questions as “Is this true in your country?” and “Do you remember when you discovered in the United States it was different?”

Roxanne: How about two men, 30 years old, walking down [a nearby street], they’re brothers. Holding hands, yes or no?<sup>8</sup>

*This is the third time Roxanne has posed this question, though each time she has rephrased it. She’s been trying to establish that in the United States, unlike other countries, same-sex affection in public is likely to indicate a romantic or sexual relationship. But there seems to be some confusion, or possibly dissent. Am I imagining it, or is Roxanne slightly more rushed than usual? Perhaps a little uncomfortable with silence?*

Students: No, no, no.

Roxanne: How did you learn that?

*Interesting that there’s no need to ask why brothers wouldn’t hold hands—that’s presumed to be understood. I like her question for making it explicit that this cultural norm or “rule” is not inherent but needs to be learned. It would be possible to answer this question without saying too much about oneself, or one could be quite personal. It’s interesting that she asks how they learned the norm but not what their opinion of it is.*

Raul: Because.

Pablo: [barely discernible] I knew before I came.

Roxanne: A volleyball game? Whadju say?

*Even the teacher, standing very near Pablo, apparently can’t hear him. Why is he speaking so softly? Roxanne exaggerates her confusion by making a funny face. I wonder if she is trying to inject a little humour into this moment. And, if so, why.*

Pablo: Oh no.

Roxanne, Pablo, students: [laughter]

*I doubt I am the only one who thinks Pablo is gay. Are others as eager as I am to hear what he’s trying to say? Is their laughter meant in part to invite, in part to distract? Or perhaps they’re just laughing at Roxanne’s funny comment and funny face.*

Pablo: I said I knew before I came to America.

Roxanne: You knew before you came.

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<sup>7</sup> Participants later reported that this was the first time anything gay or lesbian had been mentioned in this class.

<sup>8</sup> The following transcription conventions are used:  
- Self-correction, a false start or a syntactical shift  
[ ] Explanatory information  
(?) Indecipherable speech

Initial capitals in midsentence mark the beginning of reported speech. The absence of a period or question mark at the end of a turn indicates that the speaker was cut off.

*A volleyball game! Quite funny, this mix-up, but nobody laughs. Have they still not heard him? I am struck by Pablo's bravery. To disclose to his classmates and his teacher that he had prior knowledge about this affection thing, that it did not surprise him, this makes me wonder whether knowing was important. I strain to hear more.*

**Pablo:** But-

**Student:** Say it again the question.

**Neuriden:** What's the question, please?

*Oh no! Back to the question, for the fourth time now! It's like little anchors being dropped all around us, just as we are about to leave the shore. Yanked back once again. What's the difficulty with the question? Are people stirred up by this topic, maybe having trouble concentrating? Is anyone shocked to be discussing this in a classroom? Or do they find it so fascinating they want to make sure they aren't missing anything?*

**Roxanne:** The question. Two men are walking down the street, and they are brothers. In [this city]. Do they hold hands?

**Student:** Yeah.

**Many students:** No. No. No.

**Roxanne:** How did you know that? How did you learn that?

*She addresses this question to the whole class, but I want her to return to Pablo. Each time he has spoken up, he has lost the floor almost immediately. Although many students have something to say, nobody's really answered Roxanne's question. Would it be easier to answer if it were less personal — "How do people learn that?"*

**Raul:** Not anywhere else. I don't know, I don't think they do that. One they- Once they hold hands, they don't- they don't hold hands.

*Is he saying that brothers don't hold hands in any country? That if they try it, they quickly learn never to do it again? Has he changed his mind midsentence about what he's willing to say? Or is he simply struggling with the English?*

**Roxanne:** [to Raul] But in your country [Mexico] is it possible?

*Roxanne clearly expects a contrast between "your country" and this one.*

**Raul:** Only when they're kids.

**Student:** It's possible. Hm-hm.

**Roxanne:** Some people yes, some people no.

*Who said "It's possible"? Who is nodding yes? Roxanne reads their faces and gives us this report, but—like many of the students—I can see only the backs of heads, rows of them. Roxanne's voice is steady now, the slightly high-pitched edge is gone, and her face is bright!*

**Neuriden:** Yeah.

**Student:** This mean, this mean (?)

**Raul:** (?) They're gay if they hold hands.

*Raul says this very casually. No big deal.*

**Neuriden:** We [he's from Morocco] don't interpret the- the- the contact by sex. No. That's another interpretation.

**Roxanne:** That's another what?

**Neuriden:** We don't interpret action by sex.

**Roxanne:** Oh! Interesting!

*This is Roxanne's most exuberant response to any comment yet.*

Neuriden: Just friendship

Roxanne: Yeah.

Neuriden: Or human

Roxanne: Yeah.

Neuriden: We don't have interpretation.

Roxanne: Yeah. So you don't attach some meaning about sex or love or something.

*I get a sense that Roxanne is jumping in too quickly, too readily, intervening too much, but at the same time I see that her comments do help to move the discussion along. And she does come across as friendly and genuinely interested.*

Neuriden: No, no, no. Sex, no.

*He manages to distinguish sex from love without seeming to criticise the teacher's paraphrase. Smoothly done.*

Roxanne: [to Fabiola] And you're saying No we don't either, we don't either.

*It's interesting whose murmured comments or gestures get acknowledged by the teacher and whose don't.*

Mi-Young: You know it's OK but we never thought like on the street people you know same sex hold you know hold hand each other, we never thought they are gay or they're lesbian. In our country (?) [Korea] people doesn't, is not many people you know watch gay, watch and find out gay or lesbian.

*Mi-Young speaks earnestly, with a slightly exaggerated sharpness to the "g" of "gay," the "l" of "lesbian." Does that extra stress mean she thinks these are bad things to be? I wonder if she's about to say something antigay.*

Roxanne: Yeah.

Mi-Young: Most people, people like

Roxanne: You mean um not many people?

*What was Mi-Young going to say about most people? Why did it get changed into "not many people"? Is Roxanne concerned that unless she takes frequent turns, this discussion might go in directions she can't control?*

Mi-Young: Really difficult. Very small.

*Is it difficult to tell who is gay? Or difficult to be gay? What's very small?*

Roxanne: It's a secret kind of? You mean?

Mi-Young: Yes.

Many students: (?)

*A lot of energy, but I can't hear anyone because they're all talking at once.*

Student: We don't know.

Roxanne: You don't know. It's not easy to see.

*Does Roxanne worry that students might think of her as a lesbian? Does her willingness to have this discussion make that speculation more likely? If they did think she was a lesbian, would the classroom dynamics change?*

Raul: It's not that open.

*I'm surprised that Raul is talking again, and with such passion! Before today I've never once heard him talk in front of the whole class. He would just sit in the front, slouched, looking disinterested, ultra casual, Mr. Cool.*



Student: No.

Roxanne: It's not open.

Raul: It's like uh if were in my hometown [in Mexico] we see two people walk, two mens, holding hands. Afraid they're gonna get shot. [little laugh]

*Shot. The word shocks, but does not surprise. I doubt I'm the only one in the room who has felt this very fear. But does he mean the men would be afraid or the spectator? Why do some wish us dead anyway? Will discussions in classrooms make any difference?*

Students: [laughter]

*People laugh. And then, following the pattern, look to the teacher for a response. She has not joined the laughter. To me, this is her most challenging moment so far. If it were me up there, I would feel very aware that my response—not just what I say but also what I show—could have consequences for this discussion and future ones too. What would Roxanne say if she were not being “the teacher,” with two dozen faces looking at hers? For that matter, what might Pablo or Mi-Young or the silent Lien say if they were not sitting in rows being “students”?*

Roxanne: Really?!

Students: [laughter]

Roxanne: Wow.

*Roxanne's “wow” is slow and flat, the kind of thing people say when they hear bad news. It signals through the laughter that this matter is serious. And sad. I am anxious for her to say more. But as I watch I am struck by the profound concern she manages to convey with her minimal words, her solid stance, her listening face.*

Raul: Bad down there too.

*I note the irony of my own judgments—if I had been asked to predict the student most likely to say something negative about gay people, I would have chosen Raul, with his masculinist Mr. Cool persona. But here he is saying that a place where gay men could get shot is a bad place. What really surprises me is that Raul doesn't appear to be the slightest bit self-conscious about taking this stance in front of his (male) peers.*

Roxanne: Wow!

*Again, with even more feeling. She does not run from this moment or rush it away with words. Somehow “wow” seems the right thing to say. I'm suddenly grateful that she's the one up there, all eyes on her, and I'm the one just watching.*

Raul: Usually they're like, they're kinda open, but they're not like- not this open, you know. Like

Roxanne: Uh-hm.

Raul: So normal here to see couples holding

Roxanne: Yeah.

Raul: Same sex together.

*I'm thrilled that Raul, sounding completely matter-of-fact, chooses the word “normal” here! I'm so used to cringing when I hear students use “normal” as a synonym for “straight.” It's funny, but it's Raul's very ease with this topic that makes me think he must be straight. Am I the only one wondering who might be queer and whether they welcome this discussion, or fear it? It occurs to me that a good way to open this*

*discussion might have been to ask whether anyone had seen same-sex affection here. It's kind of amazing that nobody has said anything homophobic. Is this in part because Roxanne has asked them to speculate rather than debate? Clever.*

[Raul's mobile phone rings]

Roxanne: [to Raul] Is that your thing

Students: [laughter]

Roxanne: I keep hearing?

Students: [laughter]

*It's like a scene from a movie. Of all things, Raul's phone, and of all moments, this one! Roxanne is smiling. She seems relieved by the opportunity for distraction. Judging by the vigorous laughter, so do others.*

Fabiola: You know what's so funny about this is you know we, uh we don't have in mind direct for this situation for sexually. I mean I can see somebody holding hands and and just look at, don't come nothing to my mind.

*As the laughter dies down Fabiola jumps in, animated and chatty.*

Roxanne: Yeah.

Fabiola: You know. But of course if you would see something more than that. And then maybe (?) my attention. Because in my country [Brazil] I mean like for example be like long time here and when get back, you know go back to my country again, I don't know 1 year after that or something like. And I'm gonna see my friends! I'm gonna HUG them and walking you know! [little laugh] And like uh you think people- maybe if you would do this here people Ah! Maybe they are gay!

*Fabiola is the first to position herself not as someone who sees same-sex affection but as someone who does it. She rather boldly implies that, depending on the cultural context, she herself could be perceived as gay. And yet her choice of pronouns slightly distances her from this insinuation—she doesn't say “maybe if I would do this here people Ah! Maybe she is gay!” Also, when she says “Maybe they are gay!” her tone conveys surprise, but without implying that being perceived as gay is either good or bad. I wonder if others are afraid to speak up because they don't think they can manage these kinds of nuances in English. Do they worry that the attitude they wish to convey will be misread? Or maybe challenged?*

Roxanne: Uh-hu.

Fabiola: You know? But it's kind of feeling, it's different feeling

[Raul's mobile phone rings again]

Roxanne: Yeah.

*Same ring, but this time no laughter, no comment. Just a background sound that goes unnoticed.*

Fabiola: When you see someone you don't see for a long time.

Roxanne: Uh-hu.

*Roxanne's feedback sounds weary. None of the encouraging body language and exclamations given to Neuriden. I wonder if Roxanne is thinking about how to wrap up this discussion.*

**Fabiola:** Or when you have a very good and close relationship with someone. Even though you don't have any sexual relationship with that person.

*Interesting that she uses the gender-neutral terms "someone" and "that person"—she is still talking about women, isn't she?*

**Roxanne:** Hmm.

**Fabiola:** Sometimes you can get so close. And so you know

**Roxanne:** Uh-hu.

**Fabiola:** Hugging and grabbing.

**Roxanne:** Yeah.

**Pablo:** [quietly] In my country

**Roxanne:** Do you miss it?

*Roxanne asks the class this question just as Pablo has started to speak—I doubt she's heard him. I like her question for its spontaneous warmth, its heart-to-heart directness. It's a reminder that homophobia hurts straight people too. But at the same time the question troubles me. It is simply not addressed to those who may sometimes hold hands in public with someone of the same sex. The assumption seems to be that the likelihood of being perceived as queer would deter everyone in the room from same-sex affection here in the United States. Although some students may indeed be thinking about what they miss, what they have lost—easy affection with a friend—what about those who by moving here might have gained the possibility of public affection—with a lover?*

**Pablo:** In my country [Mexico] in every state is different.

*Amazing bravery. To reveal how knowledgeable he is about how things are for gay people in his country. To complicate the comparing-countries question by suggesting not one but many Mexicos. What's he going to say next?*

**Roxanne:** Every state.

*Once again Roxanne simply mirrors Pablo's words, responding with more enthusiasm than the flat "Uh-hu" she offered Fabiola, but not as much as the "Oh! Interesting!" she gave Neuriden.*

**Pablo:** Yeah.

**Fabiola:** It's so funny how this working because I used to walk like . . .

*Fabiola takes the floor. Pablo doesn't continue, and Roxanne doesn't pursue his point.*

## ANALYSING CLASSROOM PRACTICE

This lively discussion about the complexities of reading and producing sexual identities was prompted by a task written by the teacher. How did the task encourage inquiry, and how does queer theory relate to this class discussion?

## The Task

One of the challenges of working with the topic of lesbian or gay identities, particularly the first time it is raised, is that teachers may be unsure whether students are interested in or familiar with this topic or how they position themselves with regard to sexual identity. Added to this sense of uncertainty is the likelihood of divergent views and experiences among the students. This task was developed in a way that makes it accessible and potentially relevant to any student, as anybody—whether straight, queer, or none of the above—could see same-sex affection and speculate about what it might mean. In fact, this task was intended for students who were very likely to have seen two women or two men walking arm in arm, because in the immediate vicinity of the classroom this was virtually a daily occurrence.

Furthermore, the task calls for not just one but three or four interpretations of each scenario, which accomplishes several things. Asking for multiple interpretations serves to underscore the uncertainty often associated with reading sexual identities. This uncertainty demonstrates why verbs sometimes need to be modalised, and it also allows students to raise the possibility that the two women are lovers but does not require that they do so, as there is no right answer. Because the teacher had the students discuss their written answers in small groups, the students were exposed to even more speculations (and the teacher had the chance to circulate and find out how students were responding to the task before deciding whether further work was needed).

Another teaching challenge is to find ways of working with lesbian or gay identities, or indeed any identities that tend to be marginalised, without further marginalising (or defending or valourising) them. This task presents the scenario of seeing affection between women as both ordinary and noteworthy—ordinary in that interpreting same-sex affection is placed within the realm of the everyday (along with, e.g., eating and gift giving) and noteworthy in that asking for speculations implies a degree of ambiguity, uncertainty, or potential misunderstanding, particularly interculturally. The students are asked to speculate about what public affection between women might indicate, not to debate whether or in what circumstances women should have the right to walk arm in arm. This task thus manages to frame the interpretive process as potentially problematic rather than frame the behaviour that is being interpreted as some sort of social problem.

## The Class Discussion and Queer Theory

During the class discussion, the students noted that the extent to which gayness is marked or unmarked varies according to cultural context and that what signifies gay in one country may not in another. As a result, even seemingly nonsexual activities like walking down the street can become dilemmas—and not only for those who identify as gay (these dilemmas became the subject of discussion following the excerpt above). Interestingly, the students' comments are congruent with a queer theory view of sexual identities as culturally readable acts or positionings that are an inevitable, if complex, part of day-to-day interactions. These comments also highlight how the cultural imperative to produce so-called acceptable sexual identities (what queer theorists call *heteronormativity*) shapes not just sexual behaviour but other aspects of social interaction, such as relating to friends in public.

In this lesson, sexual identity was more than just the topic of discussion. Even as the participants talked about lesbians or gay men, they were positioning themselves and each other in terms of sexual identity. Even as they discussed the social norms that regulate behaviour with regard to same-sex affection, their discussion was being regulated by those same sorts of social norms. In fact, following queer theory, even when sexual identities are not being discussed, they are being read, produced, and regulated during the social interactions of learning and teaching. This opens up interesting questions for further research on classroom practice.

## CONCLUSION

This article has argued that within ESL, learners, teachers, teacher educators, and material developers need to be able to refer to and discuss not just straight but also lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgenderal, or queer identities. The point, however, is not simply to include a range of identities but to do so in a way that facilitates inquiry. To this end, a queer theoretical framework may prove more useful than a lesbian and gay framework because it theorises sexual identities as

- culturally contextualised, readable acts rather than inner essences that are universal;
- positionings (relational) rather than possessions (individual);
- potentially relevant to anyone rather than just to gay people.

In short, the work of queer theorists may be well suited to support the work of ESL learners and teachers, as these groups share an interest in

analysing cultural and discursive practices. Whether the intention is to critique these practices or to learn them (or a combination of the two), the task is to investigate the workings of language and culture in order to make them explicit.

I hope this article has evoked something of the rich potential that studying sexual identities offers teaching theory and practice. Much more work is needed.

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# Doing-English-Lessons in the Reproduction or Transformation of Social Worlds?

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This article tells a story of four classrooms situated in different socio-economic backgrounds. Drawing on the theoretical notions of *cultural capital*, *habitus*, *symbolic violence*, and *creative, discursive agency* as analytic tools, the story focuses on the classroom dilemmas in which students and teachers found themselves as well as the creative, discursive strategies they used to cope with these dilemmas. The implications of their strategies are discussed with reference to whether the students and teachers were doing-English-lessons in the reproduction or in the transformation of the students' social worlds.

Statements about the global spread of English and its increasing socioeconomic importance in the world have nearly become clichés towards the end of the 20th century. In the Chicago streets in 1996, the eye-catching slogan on colorful banners celebrating the 30th Annual TESOL Convention was "Teaching English to the World." Indeed, English seems to have become a precious commodity increasingly demanded by the world, and TESOL practitioners and researchers seem to be striving with all their professionalism to meet the demand of the world market. In TESOL-related journals and annual conventions, practitioners and researchers share their findings about effective methods, approaches, and material designs.

Apart from the technical concern for efficiency in teaching and learning, however, a far more diverse range of questions needs to be addressed, including whether English is implicated in the reproduction of social inequalities in different contexts in the world and, if so, how. Pennycook (1994) points out both the globally dominant position of English and the socioeconomic, cultural, and political embeddedness of English in the world. Access to English (or lack of it) often affects the social mobility and life chances of many children and adults who do not speak English as their L1 or L2. In many places in the world, the

classroom is a key site for the reproduction of social identities and unequal relations of power (Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996). Many students in the world are also likely to have an ambivalent, want-hate relationship with English, and the classroom becomes a site for their struggles and oppositional practices, which, however, often lead students to participate in their own domination (e.g., in Sri Lanka; see Canagarajah, 1993).

This article illustrates concepts that help examine the social factors reflected in the ESOL classroom. It is intended for TESOL practitioners and researchers who want to listen to more of the lived stories of English in the world and who share a similar concern with exploring ways of doing TESOL that do not participate in the reproduction of students' disadvantage. After defining some concepts that can help explain social phenomena of reproduction, I sketch the larger social context of the classrooms I studied. I then present examples of and discuss the consequences of teachers' and students' different creative, discursive strategies in response to the classroom dilemmas posed by the larger social structures.

## CULTURAL CAPITAL, SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE, AND CREATIVE, DISCURSIVE AGENCY

Theoretical notions articulated by Bourdieu (1973, 1977, 1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and Collins (1993) can serve as analytical tools for achieving a greater understanding of social phenomena of reproduction and transformation.

### Cultural Capital

Bourdieu's (1973, 1977, 1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) concept of *cultural capital* refers to language use, skills, and orientations, dispositions, attitudes, and schemes of perception (also collectively called *habitus*) that children are endowed with by virtue of socialization in their families and communities. Bourdieu argues that, through their familial socialization, children of the socioeconomic elite receive both more of and the right kind of cultural capital for school success (i.e., their habitus becomes their cultural capital).

A recurrent theme in Bourdieu's work is that children from disadvantaged groups, with a habitus incompatible with that presupposed in school, and children of the socioeconomic elite do not compete from equal starting points; thus social stratification is reproduced. Educationists (e.g., Delpit, 1988; Luke, 1996) have used the notion of cultural

capital to describe the disadvantaged position of ethnic and linguistic minorities and to problematize the notion that state-run education in modern societies is built on meritocracy and equal opportunity.

## Symbolic Violence

Bourdieu's (1984) idea of *symbolic violence* concerns how the disadvantaging effect of the schooling system is masked or legitimized in people's consciousness. School failure can be conveniently attributed to individual cognitive deficit or lack of effort and not to the unequal initial shares of the cultural capital both valued and legitimized in school:

The dominated classes allow [the struggle] to be imposed on them when they accept the stakes offered by the dominant classes. It is an integrative struggle and, by virtue of the initial handicaps, a reproductive struggle, since those who enter this chase, in which they are beaten before they start . . . implicitly recognize the legitimacy of the goals pursued by those whom they pursue, by the mere fact of taking part. (p. 165)

Symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu, is the imposition of representations of the world and social meanings upon groups in such a way that these representations are experienced as legitimate. This is achieved through a process of *misrecognition*. For instance, the recent English-only campaigns in the United States illustrate the political struggles required to create and maintain a unified linguistic market in which only one language is recognized as legitimate and appropriate for discourse in official settings, and the symbolic representation *English = American* has numerous consequences for schooling and jobs (Collins, 1993). In another example of misrecognition, many Hong Kong parents insist on fighting for places for their children in English-medium schools (often despite the fact that their children speak and understand little English) because they have steadfastly accepted the symbolic representation *English-medium schools = good schools*, even in a largely Chinese society and even after the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 (for background on the symbolic domination of English in Hong Kong, see Lin, 1996, 1997; also see Hong Kong: The Setting of the Story, below).

## Creative, Discursive Agency

The notion of *creative, discursive agency* (Collins, 1993) has its roots in the phenomenological tradition. It stresses the creative, emergent practices of social actors, who are not simply puppets of larger social forces

and structures. Bourdieu has often been accused of being overly deterministic and of being a theorist concerned more with reproduction than with transformation (see, e.g., Canagarajah, 1993; Jenkins, 1992). Jay Lemke (personal communication, November 24, 1998), however, points out that Bourdieu's thinking is not limited to reproduction; he limits only the effectiveness of single agents in changing whole fields of valuation. For instance, single agents cannot change the legitimate prestige and value attached to English in Hong Kong unless the social selection mechanism (e.g., the medium of the universities and the professions, the language of the job market; see the next section) undergoes systematic changes. Nevertheless, Bourdieu offers few analyses of the creative, discursive agency of social actors who find themselves caught in dilemmas. As Collins (1993) points out, "We need to allow for dilemmas and intractable oppositions; for divided consciousness, not just dominated minds; . . . for creative, discursive agency in conditions prestructured, to be sure, but also fissured in unpredictable and dynamic ways" (p. 134).

## HONG KONG: THE SETTING OF THE STORY

Despite its international, cosmopolitan appearance, Hong Kong is ethnically rather homogeneous. About 97% of its population is ethnic Chinese, and Cantonese is the mother tongue of the majority. English native speakers account for not more than 3% of the entire population. They constituted the privileged class of the society until July 1, 1997, when Hong Kong's sovereignty was returned to China and Hong Kong became a special administrative region of China. The English-conversant, bilingual Chinese middle class has, however, remained the socioeconomically dominant group in Hong Kong.

Although it is the mother tongue of only a minority, English has been the language of educational and socioeconomic advancement, that is, the dominant symbolic resource in the symbolic market (Bourdieu, 1991) in Hong Kong. Even in the postcolonial era, English has remained a socioeconomically dominant language in Hong Kong society. For instance, a 1998 survey ("English Is Important for Job Promotion," 1998) found that the majority of business corporations in Hong Kong preferred employees with a good command of English to employees with a good command of Chinese. English also remains the medium of instruction in most universities and professional training programmes.

In Hong Kong, the symbolic market is embodied and enacted in the many key situations (e.g., educational and job settings) in which social actors must have symbolic resources (e.g., certain types of linguistic skills, cultural knowledge, specialized knowledge and skills) in order to

gain access to valuable social, educational, and eventually material resources (Bourdieu, 1991). For instance, a Hong Kong student must have adequate English resources to enter and succeed in English-medium professional training programmes and to earn qualifications for high-income professions. The larger social context thus can pose dilemmas for teachers and students locally, and teachers and students can exercise their creative, discursive agency in dealing with their dilemmas.

## A STORY OF FOUR CLASSROOMS

Taken from the database of my ethnographic and classroom discourse study of eight classrooms in seven schools from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds in Hong Kong, the following four classroom scenarios convey the diversity of discursive practices that can be found across even similarly constrained classrooms (e.g., Classrooms B, C, and D, described below). These very different stories, however, reveal a preoccupation with a recurrent question: To what extent are classroom participants shaped by the larger social structures, such as sociocultural and familial background, and to what extent are they free to transform their lot (and habitus)?

In each scenario, I describe the class, using information from questionnaire surveys and interviews of the students, and an English reading lesson. All four teachers were Hong Kong Chinese who shared their students' mother tongue.<sup>1</sup>

### Classroom A

This Form 3 (Grade 9) class consisted of 33 students, aged 14–15, in a prestigious girls' school. The majority of the students' families lived in the expensive residential area in which the school was located. Their parents were professionals, business executives, or university professors whose level of education ranged from secondary, to university, to postgraduate. The students spoke mostly Cantonese at home but sometimes also spoke English—for example, to their Filipino domestic helpers—and they listened to TV news. They read a variety of extracurricular material in both English and Chinese, including both serious and light material, such as comics, Chinese newspapers, English newspapers, English fashion magazines, English detective stories, science fiction, popular youth magazines, *Reader's Digest* (in both the English and the

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<sup>1</sup> All names are pseudonyms. Identifying details of the schools and teachers have been changed or omitted.

Chinese editions), and Chinese translations of foreign classics (e.g., *Gone With the Wind*). The students were fluent in their responses to the teacher's questions and could elaborate on their answers with the teacher's prompting.

Teacher A's English was the best among the eight teachers who participated in my study. English seemed to be a tool she readily used in her daily life, not just in academic contexts. She spoke to her students naturally and comfortably in English about her daughter, her shopping habits, Mother's Day, and her feelings. She was interested in both Chinese and English literature, and her leisure reading included English magazines. Sometimes she would bring old magazines from home to the class library and share them with her students.

The reading lesson described below ran smoothly, and the teacher engaged students in high-level (e.g., beyond factual) questions about the story they had read. All through the lesson both teacher and students used English consistently, and, interestingly, the atmosphere in the classroom was both relaxed and seriously on task.

The teacher in Classroom A began the reading lesson with the following extended introduction:

T: Okay . . . now . . . have you brought back . . . *Flowers for Mrs. Harris*? . . . Now . . . I'd like to discuss one thing with you . . . for this lesson for this book. Have you ever wondered WHY this book is called *Flowers for Mrs. Harris* .□. and not *A Dior Dress for Mrs. Harris*? . . . Now the whole book we are talking about HOW Mrs. Harris . . . saved . . . how she worked extra hard to save up the money . . . so that she could go to Paris to buy the dress. And after that . . . aa . . . again she went through a lot of troubles in order to get the dress back . . . and at the end it was ruined. So all along we were talking about a dress . . . and Mrs. Harris .□. but why . . . why *Flowers for Mrs. Harris*? . . . All right now . . . I want to spend . . . aa . . . the next 5 to 10 minutes or so . . . and try to discuss in groups, okay? Aam . . . you can probably find some hints .□. towards the end of this book, in the last chapter.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Numbers preceding speaking turns are transcribing machine counter numbers. Transcription conventions are as follows:

<u>          </u>	Utterances in Cantonese
//	Simultaneous utterances
=	Speaking turn latched to a preceding one
[ ]	Contextual information
( ), (??)	Unintelligible items; items in doubt
::, :::	Lengthening of sounds
*	Turns of particular interest
. .	Short pause
. . .	Longer pause
= =	Utterance carried over to another line
(1)	1-second pause
(2)	2-second pause
UPPERCASE	Accentuation

The students swiftly formed groups and talked. The teacher walked over to a group and started to engage the students in thinking more deeply about the story by asking them some guiding questions, such as “What did Mrs. Harris see in those flowers?” or “Besides the flowers, how else can she feel that friends are very important?” After spending some time with one group, she moved onto another group and did the same.

After about 15 minutes she asked the whole class more questions about the story. The students readily answered them, and she built on their answers to bring out the themes of the story: friendship, hard work, and courage. She then talked about the class’s upcoming examination and encouraged her students to emulate Mrs. Harris by working hard and not losing heart when faced with difficulties. During most of the lesson, the students seemed to be attentive to their teacher or on task.

## Classroom B

This Form 2 (Grade 8) class consisted of 42 students—20 boys and 22 girls—aged 12–14 years. The school was located in a government-subsidized public housing estate, and the students’ families largely lived in the nearby public housing estates. Their parents were manual or service workers whose level of education ranged from primary to secondary school. The students spoke only Cantonese at home and watched the news on TV. Most of the boys read comics, newspapers, and popular youth magazines, and most of the girls read love stories, ghost stories, newspapers, and popular youth magazines. Neither the boys nor the girls read any extracurricular materials in English.

I informally interviewed a group of boys whom I observed to be the most resistant to the teacher in the classroom. They were playful and testing, as if they were checking whether I could understand their inside jokes. When I asked them questions, such as whether they liked English or their English lessons, they replied in the affirmative but in an exaggerated and joking way. I sensed that they were trying to give me the answers they thought I was after, so I repeated that I would like to hear what they really thought and that I would not tell anything they said to the school authorities. Then, apparently more willing to voice their feelings, they said they found their English lessons boring and did not understand much of what the teacher said, as she would speak only in English. When asked why they did not tell the teacher this and request that she explain the things they did not understand, the boys said the teacher would only explain again in English, and they would still not understand. They said they chatted and played in the classroom because the lesson was very boring, but they were also afraid of being asked by the



teacher to answer questions. They said they felt very *yyu* (without face) standing up in class and not being able to answer the teacher's questions.

The boys had a very cynical view of school life and their future. They said they did not like learning English, but they knew that without English they could not find a job in that society. They also stated that they did not believe they would be able to get into the university.

Teacher B's relationship with some of the boys appeared to be stressful at times. For example, sometimes she chided the boys angrily for not paying attention or for chatting with their neighbours. This atmosphere was evident one day in a reading lesson I observed. The teacher started by saying that the students were going to read chapter 30 of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in groups of four or five and that each group would send a representative to retell the chapter to the whole class in 50–60 words. Each group was to first write a summary that covered the main points in that chapter. As the teacher gave these instructions, the class was noisy, and some students said loudly in Cantonese that they did not know what to do. The teacher repeated her instructions and walked around to help students form groups and explain again what they were expected to do. I observed many non-teacher-approved activities in the classroom and heard a great deal of noise. Most of the students were off task, chatting and joking in Cantonese. A girl at the back of the room was writing the lyrics of a popular Cantonese love song on a piece of paper. The teacher seemed exhausted as she circulated around the classroom trying to get her students to do the task. All through the lesson the teacher consistently spoke English whereas the students invariably spoke Cantonese except when called on to retell the story. To retell their chapter, they read mechanically from a series of sentences written on a piece of paper while most of the other students continued to chat noisily. After a student finished reading from the paper, the teacher would say, "Very nice, their report includes all the points" or "Quite nice, they have covered some of the points" and immediately call on another group's representative. The fact that she seemed to be running out of time and had to get through all the retellings within the time allotted for the lesson might explain the brevity of her feedback to the students.

## Classroom C

This Form 2 (Grade 8) class consisted of 39 students (19 male and 20 female) aged 13–14 years. The school was located in a town close to an industrial area. The socioeconomic backgrounds of the students and their sociolinguistic and extracurricular literacy habits resembled those of their counterparts in Classroom B. Their English fluency, as based on what I observed in the classroom, seemed to be rather limited for their

grade level. The textbook contained many words that they did not understand or know how to pronounce.

When I informally interviewed a group of boys after class, they told me that they found English boring and difficult but also said they knew it was very important to learn English well. *Boring* was a word these boys used frequently to describe their life and school. They found schoolwork generally boring but still preferred to go to school because they could at least see and play with friends there. They said it would be even more boring to stay at home all day.

The reading lesson I observed had three stages. In the prereading stage, the teacher asked some questions about the topic of the story ("Heaven-Queen Festival") using the initiation-response-feedback (IRF) discourse format (Heap, 1985; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Then, in the reading stage, the teacher wrote 10 numbered reading comprehension questions on the blackboard and gave the class 15 minutes to read silently and note the answers to the questions by underlining relevant parts of the text. In the answer-checking stage, the teacher elicited answers from the class using the IRF discourse format. The teacher often had to repeat or elaborate on her English questions in Cantonese to get responses from students; she then rephrased the students' Cantonese response in English.

In the following excerpt from the answer-checking stage, the students' creativity is evident in an otherwise rather uninteresting IRF discourse. The teacher had been asking factual reading comprehension questions about "Heaven-Queen Festival," which the students had just read. She asked Question 9 ("What happened when she answered her mother?") in English. No response was forthcoming, so she elaborated on the question in Cantonese in pursuit of a response from her students.

- 870 T: What happened? . . . Leih Lohn-Mihng (2) when she answered her mum (1) her mum called her name, and when she answered her mum, what happened?
- \*872 Leih: Her old-man fell off to the (ground). [chuckling towards the end of his sentence] =
- 872.5 Ss: = Haha! haha! haha! hahahaha! [Other students laugh heartily.]
- 872.8 T: What?! (2) louder! [as students laugh]
- \*873.2 Chan: Her old-man fell off to the street! [chuckling] =
- 873.5 S1: = Hihihihik!! = [laughing]
- 873.8 S2: = (Is there) a street?
- \*874 T: Is there a street? [in an amused tone; some students laugh]
- \*874.5 Leih: fell into // the sea =
- \*874.8 T: // = WHERE did he fall into? [quite amusingly]
- 875 Leih: Sea that is.
- 875.2 T: Yes . . . fell into the sea.

- 875.5 S1: fell off to the street.  
 875.8 S2: Her old-man fell off to the street.  
 876 T: // Right? (1) Her father dropped into the SEA! = =  
 876 S3: //Hekhek! [laughing]  
 876.5 T: = = Right? (2) In that manner died . . . SHH! (1) Okay . . finally . . SHH! Number 10 . . .

The need to base one's answer on (or find the answer in) the text was a recurrent concern for the teacher, voiced in the recurrent prompts and follow-up questions, such as "Where can you find it?", "Does the book really say so?", and "Look at Paragraph X, Line Y," found in other parts of the lesson transcript. However, an answer that comes from the book can be boring to the students. The factual nature of the questions left little room for these lively 13-year-olds to use their imaginations. In the lesson excerpt above a student has exploited the response slot playfully by illegitimately putting forward a contribution that turned the whole story into a comic-strip type of story, which the students enjoyed reading outside school. In their favourite comic strips, the characters did funny, impossible things, and amusement and enjoyment came from superimposing impossible and unpredictable fantasy on the familiar, predictable, mundane world. The boy who gave this funny answer (Turns 872 and 873.2) seems to be a skillful storyteller with a ready audience, which is reflected in the hearty laughter of his fellow students.

## Classroom D

This Form 1 (Grade 7) remedial class<sup>3</sup> consisted of 30 students (20 boys and 10 girls) aged 12–13 years. The students' families lived in the nearby public housing estates. The socioeconomic backgrounds of the students and their sociolinguistic and extracurricular literacy habits were like those of their counterparts in Classrooms B and C.

The atmosphere in the classroom was very lively. Most students were attentive to the teacher and focused on their lesson tasks most of the time. They seemed to enjoy their English lessons and were both eager and often able to answer the teacher's questions.

When I asked the students in informal interviews after class whether they liked English and their English lessons, they said that they did and that they especially liked their English teacher. They liked to hear her tell stories from their English reader, and they appreciated that she could explain things clearly to them. For example, when explaining the difference between *little* and *few*, the teacher helped the students

<sup>3</sup> Extra government resources have been given to junior secondary schools in Hong Kong to enable remedial classes to be smaller than the usual class size.

remember the difference by saying that *little* had more letters than *few* and so was used with uncountable nouns whereas *few*, which did not have so many letters, was used with countable nouns. The students found this mnemonic tip very helpful. They also spoke positively about their studies and their future. They thought they would be able to learn English well because they could see themselves doing better and better on their English dictations, exercises, and tests. The teacher had kept a personal progress chart for the students so that they knew how they were doing over time, and she gave prizes to the best-performing students. The students felt that they could succeed in school and would have a good chance of furthering their studies (e.g., entering the university) in the future.

Of the eight teachers in my study, Teacher D used the most Cantonese. She explained vocabulary, gave directions, made the English texts come alive, explained grammatical points, and interacted with students in Cantonese most of the time. She believed that, because the students were still in Form 1, they were not yet able to use English all the time, and using Cantonese could help them become more interested in the lessons and understand them better. She also found that her students had made good progress over the academic year, as reflected, for instance, in their increased motivation to learn English and their improved scores on school tests and examinations.

Teacher D was the class's form teacher (i.e., the teacher in charge of the class's overall performance). She spent most of her recess, lunch, and after-school hours talking to individual students with various problems, for example, forgetting to bring books to school, being noisy in other teachers' lessons, or scoring poorly on dictations or tests. I sensed that her good relationship with her students (as reflected in their eager responses to her questions and their cooperative responses to her directives) might have something to do with the amount of individual attention she gave to each student in her class. Every day, she ate her lunch with a student, thus maintaining both a classroom and a personal relationship with her students. However, her school days were busy from early morning until late afternoon. She seemed to be an energetic teacher who did not mind doing extra work and spending extra time with her students.

The following excerpt from the beginning of a reading lesson I observed illustrates the atmosphere in her classroom. The teacher announced that she was going to ask questions about the part of the English storybook that the class had read in a previous lesson.

469 T: Okay, let me ask you about the story, and see if you can still remember it! Last time we told the story to page 40, that is the last—the lesson before the last lesson, and then in the

last lesson we told the story from page 40 to page 42! Now let me see if you can still remember the story . . . Sinbad was sailing in a boat, remember? Those jewels, then he had given away half of the jewels to . . . and he had bought a boat, and he had bought . . . recruited many sailors, after that, he also bought four boats, one sailing towards the East, one towards the South, one towards the West, and one towards the North. Sinbad himself took a boat, sailing back to where? . . . sailing back to where? [A girl raises her hand; T turns to her.] Yes,

- 478 Girl 1: [stands up and speaks] Brazil!  
478.5 T: Go back to Brazil?! No ;;;  
478.8 Ss: [speaking in their seats] Baghdad!  
479 T: No, not Brazil! [Many students raise their hands; T points to a boy.]  
479.5 Boy 1: [stands up and speaks] Baghdad!  
479.8 T: Baghdad, how to spell . . . Baghdad? English that is, in English . . . Baghdad. [Girl 1 raises her hand again; T turns to her and gestures her to speak.] Yes,  
481.5 Girl 1: [stands up and speaks] b-a-g-h . . . d-a-d [T writes on board as the girl spells.]  
483 T: Yes! How to read this word?  
483.8 Ss: [speaking in their seats] Baghdad! Baghdad!  
484 T: No, Baghdad, Baghdad, Baghdad that is. Okay, as they were thinking of going back home, alas! on the way back, they ran into a GROUP OF . . .  
487 Ss: [in their seats] Monkeys! monkeys! monkeys!  
488 T: Monkeys! Yes! [writes *monkey* on the blackboard] That group of monkey-men, that group . . . monkey-men that is, monkey-men that is, they took them to an island, what is the na::me of this island? Can you spell the word? [Another girl raises her hand.] Yes,  
492 Girl 2: [stands up]: Z-u-g . . .  
492.5 T: Z-u-g . . .  
492.8 Girl 2: [standing up] (*d*)  
493 T: No, *b, b* for boy. [writes *Zugb* on the board] How to read it? A very ugly place.  
494.3 Ss: [in their seats] Zugb!  
494.5 T: Z::ugb::  
495 Ss: [in their seats] ZUGB!!  
495.5 T: Alas! Zugb!! An ugly place for the ugly men. An ugly place for those ugly men to live in. Those monkeys brought them there for what?  
498 Boy 1: [speaking in his seat] (Dump him there!) [Another boy raises his hand.]  
498.3 T: Yes,  
498.5 Boy 2: (Giant ??)  
498.8 T: Right! How to say *giant* in English?

- 499 Boy 3: [in his seat] Giant!  
 499.5 T: Giant in English is . . . Leung-Mahn-Yih!  
 500 Leung-Mahn-Yi: [standing up] Giant.  
 500.5 T: Giant! Very good! Yes! [writes *giant* on board]

In the excerpt above, the teacher dramatized, with intonations and gestures, the part of the story about Sinbad sailing in a boat. The teacher then asked the students where Sinbad was sailing back to (end of Turn 469).

When the teacher gave negative feedback to a student who had answered (Turn 478.5), other students immediately called out answers from their seats (Turn 478.8). The teacher signaled to a boy, who stood up and answered correctly (Turn 479.5: "Baghdad"). In this way, the teacher maintained the practice of having a student-bids-and-teacher-accepts presequence to a student response.

The teacher then repeated the correct answer and immediately initiated another question in the feedback-cum-initiation slot (Turn 479.8). Interestingly, this question differed from the first one (end of Turn 469: "Sinbad . . . sailing back to where?"). Instead of following the story line and asking about what happened to Sinbad next, the second question required the students to spell the English version of the name of a place, "Baghdad," which had been offered by a student as a response and acknowledged and repeated by the teacher (Turns 479.5 and 479.8). The question required them to shift their focus from the content of the story for a while to concentrate on the language in which this content was couched. For the teacher, the place name in Cantonese was not an acceptable final answer, and her follow-up question seems to have caused the students to reformulate the answer into an ultimately acceptable format—"in English" (follow-up initiation, Turn 479.8).

In Turns 481.5 and 483, the teacher ultimately elicited the L2 formulation of the answer ("Baghdad"), and she wrote it on the blackboard. Only L2 answers were written on the blackboard. The teacher's act of writing the student's response on the blackboard appeared to confer on it the status of a final answer (Heyman, 1983).

Unlike Teacher C, who often performed her initiations in an L2 (question)–L1 (annotation of question) sequence, Teacher D often initiated a question about the story in the L1. Teacher D seemed to use two consecutive IRF formats in two ways. The first IRF format engaged the students in telling the story with her (e.g., Turns 469–479.8). The focus was on the content of the story, and the questions asked in the initiation slots followed naturally from the story line. The second IRF format (e.g., Turns 479.8–483) guided the students to reformulate in English the Cantonese answer that had been acknowledged in the first IRF format. The second IRF format could be repeated to guide the

students to focus on the linguistic aspects of the final L2 answer. For example, the second IRF format was repeated in Turns 483, 483.8, and 484 to get the students to say *Baghdad* in English.

## DISCUSSION

By pairing a story-focus IRF format with an immediately following language-focus IRF format, the teacher led the students to reformulate their earlier L1 responses into English, the language that they were supposed to be learning. Teacher D's use of the IRF formats stands in contrast to Teacher C's. For instance, Teacher C always started with L2 texts or questions in the initiation slot of the IRF format and then used the L2-L1 format in the same initiation slot to annotate the L2 text or question. Students usually responded in the L1. Then the teacher herself reformulated the students' L1 response into the L2 and conferred final-answer status on it. This kind of discourse practice allowed the students to get away with offering L1 responses only. The students were not required to reformulate their L1 responses in the L2, as the teacher did it for them in the feedback slot of the IRF format. Teacher C's discourse structure in the reading lesson can be represented as follows:

- Teacher initiation (L2-L1)
- Student response (L1)
- Teacher feedback (L1-L2)

In contrast, Teacher D used two different IRF formats in the reading lesson:

1. Story-focus IRF
  - Teacher initiation (L1)
  - Student response (L1)
  - Teacher feedback (L1)
2. Language-focus IRF
  - Teacher initiation (L1 or L2)
  - Student response (L1 or L2)
  - Teacher feedback (L2, or start No. 2 again until student response is in L2)
3. Start No. 2 again to focus on another linguistic aspect of the L2 response elicited, or return to No. 1 to focus on the story again

This kind of discourse practice allowed the teacher to interlock enjoyment of the story, via the use of the story-focus IRF, with a language

learning focus, via the use of the language-focus IRF. Note that Teacher D never started an initiation in the L2, in sharp contrast to the discourse practices of Teacher C, who always started her initiations with L2 texts or questions. By always starting in the L1, Teacher D began with what the students could fully understand and were familiar with. On the other hand, by using the language-focus IRF format immediately after the story-focus IRF format, she pushed the students to move from what they were familiar with (e.g., L1 expressions) to what they needed to become more familiar with (e.g., the L2 counterparts of the L1 expressions).

## THE REPRODUCTION OR TRANSFORMATION OF HABITUS?

You want to know why I don't pay attention in English lessons? You really want to know? Okay, here's the reason: NO INTEREST!! It's so boring and difficult and I can never master it. But the society wants you to learn English! If you're no good in English, you're no good in finding a job! (in Cantonese; 14-year-old boy, Classroom B, informal interview)

As mentioned, Bourdieu (1973, 1977, 1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) defines habitus as the language use, skills, and orientations, attitudes, dispositions, and schemes of perception that children are endowed with by virtue of socialization in their families and communities. The four classroom scenarios represent situations with varying degrees of compatibility between the habitus of the students and what the school English lesson required of them.

### Compatible Habitus: Classroom A

The middle-class students in Classroom A brought the right kind of habitus (i.e., cultural capital) with them to the school lesson: They had both the correct attitudes and interest and the correct linguistic skills and confidence to participate in high-level discussions on the themes of the story in English with one another and the teacher. Doing-English-lessons in Classroom A reproduced and reinforced the students' cultural capital and both their subjective expectations and objective probabilities of succeeding in school and the society. Neither the teacher nor the students were subject to dilemmas caused by incompatibility of habitus; hence the atmosphere of relaxed harmony in Teacher A's classroom.



## Incompatible Habitus: Classrooms B and C

In Classrooms B and C, however, the students' habitus was incompatible with what the English lesson required of them. The 14-year-old schoolboy quoted above expresses vividly what Bourdieu (1977) would call a working-class child's *subjective expectations of objective probabilities*:

Social class, understood as a system of objective determinations, must be brought into relation not with the individual or with the "class" as a *population*, . . . but with the class habitus, the system of dispositions (partially) common to all products of the same structures. Though it is impossible for *all* members of the same class (or even two of them) to have had the same experiences, in the same order, it is certain that each member of the same class is more likely than any member of another class to have been confronted with the situations most frequent for the members of that class. The objective structures that science apprehends in the form of statistical regularities (e.g. employment rates, income curves, probabilities of access to secondary education, frequency of holidays, etc.) inculcate, through the direct or indirect but always convergent experiences that give a social environment its *physiognomy, with its "closed doors," "dead ends," and limited "prospects"* [italics added], . . . in short, the sense of reality or realities that is perhaps the best-concealed principle of their efficacy. (pp. 85–86)

The students in Classroom B seemed to find themselves confronted with a language in which they had neither interest, competence, nor confidence but a language they recognized, though angrily, as a key to success in their society. They appeared to conclude that they could never master the language and that they would be excluded from any chance of social success. Their behaviour in the classroom may have stemmed from their contradictory feelings about their recognition of their own inability to change and from angry protests of their fate: They engaged in classroom practices oppositional to the curriculum and the teacher (e.g., ignoring the lesson task or the teacher and talking to their peers in their mother tongue most of the time), fully expecting that they would never be able to master the foreign language. Their resistance seems to resemble that of marginalized ethnic minorities in North American inner-city schools (see, e.g., Solomon, 1992).

Teacher B also faced a dilemma: She had to teach English in English only, as this was her school's policy and, in general, a methodological prescription dominant in English language teacher education in Hong Kong; get her limited-English-proficient and apparently uncooperative students to understand her instructions and explanations; and complete the lesson task within the prescribed time limit. Exhausted and frustrated from running around the classroom to get her large class of 42

students on task, she apparently failed to connect in any meaningful way with them despite her painful efforts.

The picture is slightly different in Classroom C. In an informal after-class interview, the students described their lesson and English itself as “boring.” However, the teacher seemed to be (partly) successful in getting her students to collaborate in extracting information from the story text to answer the kind of reading comprehension questions typically found on school tests and examinations in Hong Kong. For her, the mother tongue was a tool to use in this process. She seemed to be imparting examination skills, albeit in ways that students might have found unengaging. She apparently connected to her students at some level, such as sharing their jokes (she smiled and appeared to be amused by the student’s funny answer), although she also seemed eager to socialize students into the text-information extraction mind-set. In this respect there was some incompatibility between the students’ habitus and what the teacher required of them in the reading lesson. Using the L1 as a bridging tool, the teacher seemed to be partly inducing and partly coercing her students into a specific school mode of orientation to text, with varying degrees of success across her students.

As a result of the teacher’s efforts, the students may have become better versed in examination skills, although their basic habitus orientation towards English—finding it boring and irrelevant to their daily life—remained unchanged. The teacher’s use of the L1 may reflect a discursive strategy for dealing with her dilemma: how to get her students to collaborate in a task they perceive as unengaging.

## Transforming Habitus: Classroom D

The students in Classroom D came from a disadvantaged socioeconomic background, as their counterparts in Classrooms B and C did. Like their counterparts’ habitus, their habitus did not equip them with the right kind of attitudes and interest or skills and confidence in learning English. However, there were signs of their habitus being transformed through the creative, discursive agency and efforts of their teacher. For instance, she used the L1 strategically in the reading lesson to intertwine an interesting story focus and a language learning focus. She helped her students experience a sense of achievement and confidence in learning English (e.g., by charting their progress so that they could see their own improvement, by giving them mnemonic strategies for learning vocabulary usage). At school, she spent most of her spare time with her students to establish a personal relationship with each of them. With all these extra personal, creative efforts, she succeeded in

helping her students develop interest, skills, and confidence in learning a language that was otherwise perceived as difficult, boring, and basically irrelevant in the daily lives of these students, who came from a Cantonese-dominant, working-class habitus.

## IMPLICATIONS

### Choosing a Method

TESOL practitioners working with students from backgrounds that do not give them the right kind of cultural capital face the important task of searching for the appropriate methodology to use. Rather than follow the methods prescribed by their teacher education, TESOL practitioners may benefit by developing their own appropriate methodology for their students based on their own reflective action research (Holliday, 1994). For instance, although the prescription to use only the target language in teaching the target language is common, my observations of the four classrooms described here show clearly that what matters is not whether a teacher uses the L1 or the L2 but rather how a teacher uses either language to connect with students and help them transform their attitudes, dispositions, skills, and self-image—their habitus or social world. For instance, unlike the self-defeating students in Classroom B, the students in Classroom D were not pessimistic about their life chances: “I want to further my studies”; “I feel confident about learning English,” as they told me. Their school results confirmed their newfound confidence and expectations. The question then is not one of whether to use the L1 or not; it is one of searching for creative, discursive practices that are appropriate to the students. In this respect, my observations confirm Collins’s (1993): that individual creative, discursive agency can make transformation of one’s social world possible despite the larger constraining, reproducing social structures outlined by Bourdieu (1977).

### Interrogating Symbolic Violence

Although creative, discursive agency offers some hope for transforming habitus and life chances, TESOL practitioners cannot neglect the need to continually interrogate power and fields of valuation in the larger society (Luke, 1996; Pennycook, 1994). For instance, the students in Classroom D might have found a bit of the cultural capital that they needed for school and social success through their own and their teacher’s extra creative efforts, yet they were still in a race with rules laid

down by the privileged classes (e.g., the students in Classroom A), who were already way ahead of them. However, all parties—teachers, students, curriculum designers, and parents—often take these rules for granted and perceive them as legitimate, a case of symbolic violence exercised on the students. Together with their students, TESOL practitioners need to continue to encourage the interrogation of the role of English in their society and in their life chances, that is, to develop a critical social theory of practice (Luke, 1996). As Pennycook (1994) points out, “In some senses, then, the English language classroom, along with other sites of cultural production and political opposition, could become a key site for the renewal of both local and global forms of knowledge” (p. 326).

Understanding existing classroom practices and their sociocultural and institutional situatedness is a first step towards exploring the possibility of alternative creative, discursive practices that might contribute to the transformation of the students’ habitus. More stories await an opportunity to be told. I hope that by telling these lived stories of classroom participants, we as TESOL practitioners and researchers can gain some insight into how we can reassess, reconceive, and ultimately repractice our role as teachers of English in the world.

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# Revisiting the Colonial in the Postcolonial: Critical Praxis for Nonnative-English-Speaking Teachers in a TESOL Program

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Although historically much teaching of English has been done by nonnative-English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), research on their concerns as English educators has been neglected. This article takes as its central focus the narrative of NNESTs in the context of critical praxis. It discusses a graduate seminar offered for perhaps the first time in a TESOL program for NNESTs. The article presents the process of interrogating the nativeness paradigm among NNESTs themselves via their own experiences and self-representation. It discusses the validity of conceptual tools designed to overcome disempowering discourses that may exist in TESOL programs and centers on the construction of identity among NNESTs that neither prescribes a limited role for them in the profession nor specifies definite boundaries to their capacities therein. The study suggests that the process of empowerment of NNESTs is neither linear nor simple but can nevertheless be generated within and by teachers engaged in critical praxis. It also demonstrates that many of the participants found a new relationship with their contexts, analyzed the causes of their powerlessness, and generated a new sense of agency as teachers and scholars in the field.

Pennycook (1998) puts forward a suggestive and historical argument regarding the current state of the art in English language teaching (ELT): “Some of the central ideologies of current English Language Teaching have their origins in *the cultural constructions of colonialism* [italics added]. The colonial construction of Self and the Other, of the ‘TE’ and ‘SOL’ of TESOL remain in many domains of ELT” (p. 22). Pennycook draws out a number of important connections to understand the threads of colonial experience and practice that have extended into

the postcolonial period. Although he goes beyond the economic and political analysis of colonialism, he focuses on colonialism as a “site of cultural production” of “cultural forms” that “produced European culture” and discourses (p. 16). Pennycook reveals the historical basis of some of these cultural forms—the dichotomies that define and create the image of the Other in the realm of language use. These images have found their way into the discourses of postcolonialism—including in the practice and theory of ELT.

The (re)production of cultural forms makes sense considering Pennycook’s (1998) insight that colonialism is not “only experienced by the colonized” but it is “also a lived experience of the colonizers, one that has very broad implications” (p. 35). Admittedly, the lived experiences are quite different yet are important to consider in light of the argument that colonialism “produced European culture” (p. 16) of a kind. These differences constitute an important aspect of an understanding of how certain cultural constructions of colonialism become stabilized and, subsequently, reproduced in the discourses of postcolonialism as normal, natural, and universal. If “a discourse” includes “ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting” (Gee, 1998, p. 51), then it is equally important to ask, What are some of the ways to meaningfully attempt to overcome the disempowering discourses? This article takes up one domain of ELT—the education of nonnative-English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). It specifically addresses the dichotomy of native versus nonnative English teachers by analyzing the experiences and self-representations of international (so-called nonnative) graduate students in an ESOL teacher preparation program. We ask two fundamental questions:

1. Does the discourse of ESOL teacher preparation programs constitute a colonial cultural form that disempowers its own students and professionals?
2. If so, what are the means of overcoming the dichotomy?

What follows here is a research report on critical praxis aimed at empowering nonnative-English-speaking participants as teachers in the TESOL profession. We discuss the 10-week process of individual and collective identity (re)construction and negotiation of critical issues for international English professionals within the framework of critical pedagogy. The goal of the article is twofold: (a) to present the complexities and ambiguities of the process of interrogating the construct of nonnativeness among nonnative-English-speaking students and professionals through their own experiences within the context of a critical pedagogy framework and (b) to show that the empowerment of NNESTs is neither a linear nor a simple matter. The individual engaged in critical

praxis can, however, generate that empowerment. While drawing implications for ESOL teacher preparation programs, we suggest that an integral part of educating future professionals includes (a) articulation of binary cultural representations via the experiences of the English teachers and development and (b) validation of conceptual tools that empower teachers within the boundaries of ESOL teacher preparation programs so that the teachers become agents of change within the field.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### The NS Construct

A growing number of influential voices have questioned the notion that native speakers (NSs) represent the ideal teacher of a language (e.g., Ferguson, 1992; Kachru, 1996; Nayar, 1994, in press; Widdowson, 1994). Phillipson (1992) helped touch off the recent discussion of the question of native-speaking versus nonnative-speaking English language teachers by challenging the validity of what he called the *native speaker fallacy*. He asserts that there is “no scientific validity” (p. 195) to support this proposition. He attributes its perpetuation to sociopolitical motives:

The native speaker fallacy has served the interests of the Center, while blinding both its representatives and their collaborators in the Periphery to its ideological and structural consequences. It has diverted attention from the flourishing of local pedagogical initiative that could build on local strengths and linguistic realities. (p. 199)

According to Phillipson, the greater facility that NSs are supposed to have (e.g., fluency, knowledge of idiomatic expressions, and cultural understanding) can be taught to nonnative speakers (NNSs).

Davies (1991) concentrates on both linguistic and sociolinguistic questions of the construct of the NS. He explicitly rejects the idea that the “native speaker is uniquely and permanently different from a nonnative speaker” (p. 45). He asserts that L2 learners can acquire native linguistic competence of the language even if they are outside of the L1 environment. To Davies, from a sociolinguistic perspective, “the distinction native speaker–nonnative speaker, like all majority-minority relations, is at bottom one of confidence and identity” (pp. 166–167). Significantly, he sees the NS boundary as one attributable as much to NNSs as to NSs, although he acknowledges that determining the NS construct is a difficult if not an impossible task for linguists.

Nayar (1994) provides a useful taxonomy and critical discussion of what he calls “the defining features” (p. 3) of a NS. His list includes the



following: (a) primacy in order of acquisition; (b) manner and environment of acquisition; (c) acculturation by growing up in the speech community; (d) phonological, linguistic, and communicative competence; (e) dominance, frequency, and comfort of use; (f) ethnicity; (g) nationality/domicile; (h) self-perception of linguistic identity; (i) other-perception of linguistic membership and eligibility; and (j) monolingualism. His critique of the NS construct concentrates on what he calls “linguistic imprecision and the Eurocentric unsoundness of the term” (p. 3). He concludes that monolingualism is the single feature that “validates” the term as “the person has no other language to be native of” (p. 3) and argues that “native” English speakers are defined “ethnopolitically under the mainly European credo” (Nayar, in press).

Pursuing a similar analysis, Kachru (1997) examines the construct from a historical perspective, calling it a *linguistic colonial construct*—a concept that divides language users according to the power relations of a colonial world. Similarly, for Pennycook (1998), the construct stands as a classic colonial cultural form that adheres to English discourses—built out of the superior-inferior representations of the Self and the Other and reproduced in Western postcolonial discourses.

Elsewhere (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, in press), we argue that the native-nonnative dichotomy represents not a linguistic construct but a socially constructed identity based on cultural assumptions of who conforms to the preconceived notion of a NS. Crucial factors within the set of characteristics that are socially held to represent those of the NS include, above all, national origin and accent. As we will show, these social variables that lead to the construction of identity of the Other are critical in the ongoing process of reexamining the identity of Self and Other and facing the limitations of the discourse available for alternative representations. Indeed, the fixity of the identity attached to the NS construct, despite its lack of definitional coherence, constituted a significant site of a struggle toward overcoming the subject positions by students in the seminar discussed in this article.

Despite the developing critique of the NS construct and the NS fallacy in ELT, Nayar’s (1994) observation remains valid: “Generations of applied linguistic mythmaking in the indubitable superiority and the impregnable infallibility of the ‘native speaker’ has created stereotypes that die hard” (p. 4).

Such analysis fundamentally results in two major approaches to NNESTs: the dominance approach and the difference approach, each of which takes nativeness as its focus in creating two opposite camps of TESOL professionals. The dominance approach (e.g., Medgyes, 1994; Quirk, 1995) describes the NNEST in juxtaposition to the native-English-speaking teacher, basing itself either implicitly or explicitly on the paradigm of *deficit linguistics*. For example, Quirk asserts “the need for

native teacher support and the need for non-native teachers to be in constant touch with the native language" (p. 26). The difference approach to the NNEST attempts to highlight what it sees as the positive elements that NNESTs bring to the profession by emphasizing, for example, the value of being a good model of the learner of the language and of being an empathetic teacher (cf. Braine, 1999). Accounts that take such an approach often end with a call for pluralism and collaboration in the profession.

At root, however, both of these approaches rest on the assumptions and ideology of the opposed identities of professionals in the field. One assumption is that a language belongs to its NSs (for a critique, see Smith, 1987; Widdowson, 1994). For Nayar (1994), a power dynamic between NSs and NNSs "forms the crux of the ownership issue" (p. 4). Nayar cogently argues that whether NSs own English or not, they have laid claim to "the rights and responsibilities not only of controlling the forms and norms of English globally but also of dominating the theory and practice of its teaching and research" (p. 4). Other scholars have shown that the idea of ownership of a language employs notions appropriate to property relations rather than to linguistic interaction and that national monopoly over a language contradicts the very idea of an international language (Brutt-Griffler, 1998; Smith, 1987).

The ramifications of the existence of the NS construct both in the TESOL profession and in popular use become particularly prominent when the construct finds its way into shaping the perceptions of language learners. Mounting evidence testifies to some unfortunate effects of the division of English teachers not based on linguistic and pedagogical ability (cf. Braine, 1999). Medgyes (1994) suggests that NNESTs may experience problems with professional self-esteem. Amin (1997) has found that some language learners assume that there exists an "intrinsic connection between race and language ability" among their teachers; hence they show preference for "White teachers over non-White teachers," assuming that it is only the former who "can be native speakers of English" (p. 580). Given such prevalent assumptions on the part of both teachers and students of English, the perpetuation of a particular inherited discourse needs to be addressed at various levels. We suggest that a meaningful attempt to overcome potentially disempowering discourses in teacher education that may exist in ESOL teacher preparation programs constitutes a step in this direction.

## Critical Pedagogy in TESOL

The idea behind this study and the seminar that took shape out of it is that the TESOL classroom can serve as a site for change in breaking

down the dichotomous discourses of nativeness, promote the emergence of counterdiscourses (cf. Pennycook, 1994), and lead to the construction of a unifying identity for all English teachers and professionals. The seminar intended to draw upon the cultural and intellectual resources of the participants. As a group, we wanted to collectively explore our development as English users and professionals. Through student-centered dialogue, we aimed at a critical consciousness of Western cultural assumptions and culture-bound premises within second language acquisition (SLA) theory (Johnson, 1992; Sridhar, 1994) and L2 pedagogy (Pennycook, 1998; Sridhar, 1994).

Given the context of a discourse of nativeness that is potentially disempowering for NNESTs, we conceive that they need to develop an identity of their own construction that neither prescribes a limited role for them in the profession nor specifies definite boundaries to their capacities therein. Within this process, language—and professional discourse in particular—plays a crucial role, because language influences consciousness and construction of identity (cf. Weedon, 1997). Deconstructing discursive practices occupies a central role in this process, and critical pedagogy therefore serves as an important tool.

We hold that the interconnection of Freire's (1970, 1993) conceptualization of *critical pedagogy* and Weedon's (1997) construction of *subjectivity* is central to that project. Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy defines education as a place where learners can be empowered through problem posing and a mutually created dialogue. In Weedon's theory of subjectivity, the subjectivity of individuals determines them as both sites and subjects of "discursive struggle for their identity" (p. 93). Subjectivity thus comes together with critical pedagogy in that the student as site and subject undertakes a self-empowerment process. Freire (1993) has posited the importance of such an interconnectivity of critical pedagogy and subjectivity in addressing the "need to recognize multiple constructions of power and authority in a society riven by inequalities of power and exclusionary divisions of privilege and how these are implicated in the constitution of subjectivity" (p. xi).

Weedon's (1997) conceptualization is important for our present purposes because it emphasizes that subjectivity is socially produced, not innate. In this conceptualization, subjectivity is fluid rather than fixed, allowing the possibility of its remaking through its interaction with critical pedagogy. This resonates with Freire's (1993) conceptualization, in which "there must be a growing recognition of new forms of subjectivity and new strategies of emancipatory praxis" (p. xi).

Following Freire (1993) and Weedon (1997), we conceive critical pedagogy in TESOL as the construction of a subjectivity that includes both NSs and NNSs and that works toward the goal of eliminating the colonial construct of nativeness in ELT. Defining a critical pedagogy for

TESOL integrally involves recognizing the multicultural setting of ESOL teacher preparation programs that serve international students.

## CRITICAL PRAXIS: TOWARD A PEDAGOGY OF EMPOWERMENT OF NNSs

In the winter of 1997, a pilot graduate seminar for NNESTs was offered for, perhaps, the first time in an ESOL teacher preparation program in North America. The 10-week seminar had two main objectives: (a) to raise the teachers' and students' collective consciousness concerning the status of NNSs in ELT practice through critical dialogic and (b) to empower the NNSs as ELT professionals.

Seventeen graduate students and two postdoctoral students participated in the seminar. They were all pursuing either an MA or a PhD in TESOL; they came from Korea, Japan, Turkey, Surinam, China, Togo, Burkinafaso, and Russia. Many of them had more than 5 years of teaching experience in EFL contexts.

The graduate seminar, offered as an elective, met once a week for 2½ hours for 10 weeks. Throughout the seminar, the participants were asked to keep a journal for critical reflection based on group discussion, presentations, assigned readings, and their personal experiences. The seminar was both audio- and videotaped with the participants' consent. In addition, the participants were interviewed in groups using a semistructured format. The researchers also kept field notes during the seminar and the interviews. Audiotapes from the seminar and the interviews were transcribed and analyzed to identify emergent themes.

For the purpose of this study, we operationalized four central terms of critical pedagogy. In using the word *critical*, we have based ourselves on the term *critical theories*, which are positioned in relation to counter-hegemonic social movements (Fraser, 1987, p. 31). *Praxis* is defined as "the self-creative activity through which we make the world. . . . The requirements of praxis are theory both relevant to the world and nurtured by actions in it, and an action component in its own theorizing process that grows out of practical political grounding" (Buker, in press, as cited by Lather, 1991, pp. 11–12). The term *empowerment* here means "analyzing ideas about the causes of powerlessness, recognizing systemic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change the conditions of our lives" (Lather, 1991, p. 4). It further "involves people *coming into a sense of their own power, a new relationship with their own contexts* [*italics added*]" (Fox, 1988, p. 2). Finally, like Lather (1991) and Spivak (1989), we position *pedagogy* as a site for critical praxis in which "the transformation of consciousness . . . takes place in the intersection

of three agencies—the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they together produce” (Lusted, 1986, p. 3).

The format of the seminar incorporated the basic principles of Freire’s critical pedagogy, discussed above. More specifically, following nine values of the Freirean Pedagogy (Shor, 1992), we intended the seminar to be

1. *participatory*, meaning that the teaching and learning process is both interactive and cooperative;
2. *situated*, so that materials are located in students’ language, events, and culture;
3. *critical*, in that the design of the class promotes both self-reflection and social reflection;
4. *democratic*, with discourse produced by the students and teacher in cooperation;
5. *dialogic*, meaning that the class consists of dialogue centered on concerns posed by teacher and students;
6. *desocializing*, or constructed to dissuade students from passivity in the classroom;
7. *multicultural*, in that it affirms the complexity of the multiple cultures in society;
8. *research oriented*, combining teaching and learning with classroom and community research by the teacher and the students into the sociolinguistic and social pedagogical context;
9. *activist*, aiming to lead to practical results when possible.

Because we aimed to define the students as the site and subjects of the discursive struggle for identity, we needed instruments designed toward this end. First, to bring out the collective component of the critical project, we employed a classroom dialogic, in which the goal was to pursue the shared process of (re)constructing identities as NNSs. Second, we designed a written dialogic between NNSs over issues relating to their identity as professionals to encourage students to take part in the deconstruction of socially imposed identities. Finally, to promote personal history as a site of struggle over identity, we made use of the professional autobiography.

## Students’ Voices: Classroom Dialogic

The two students who had little or no experience teaching English in their countries were unaware of the issues related to native versus nonnative professionals. These students also believed that such questions

did not play a significant role in their countries. As NNSs, however, they said that the title and the description of the seminar had led them to sign up. Furthermore, they stated that for future practice they wanted to be aware of some of the issues related to the native-nonnative division in ELT so that they could be better prepared when they encountered such questions in the future.

For 17 students, on the other hand, the “problem” of being a NNEST was all too familiar. Indeed, some students signed up for the seminar looking for the answer to problems they had had as NNSs. A student from a West African country, for example, remarked that at times in his 20 years of secondary- and college-level English teaching he had become “totally discouraged and disheartened as an English teacher” (John, CD, January 9).<sup>1</sup> Another West African student, who had taught there for a similar length of time, was curious to discover “how other NNS professionals feel about” the professional issues facing them (Daniel, CD, January 9). In explaining why they were taking the course, the students sounded two consistent themes of interest: (a) how their linguistic and cultural knowledge compared to that of NSs and (b) whose norm or standard of English they should follow in their professional endeavors.

From the beginning, the students embraced the opportunity for dialogue. A Russian student noted,

This is an extremely important course for me; I was waiting for this kind of class for two and a half years. It is very difficult to find an opportunity to engage in a prolonged dialogue about the issues that mean a lot professionally with people from many parts of the globe. The richness of the [TESOL] program comes from the fact that we are so multicultural, but the resources that we bring to the program are not adequately tapped into. *I am so very excited about sharing my autobiography as an English learner and a teacher in Russia with you; in the past, nobody was ever interested in my experience in Russia* [italics added]. (Natalia, CD, January 9)

One of us noted in field notes that “her comment today made me reflect on what we do in our TESOL program. I wonder if there is a tacit assumption on our part that we have all the answers and expect our students to accept them. Are we trying to domesticate our EFL students with our ESL ideology and practice rather than empower them?” (January 9). Empowerment requires, as this student observed, a recognition and affirmation of the place of what Weedon (1997) calls the *lived reality* of the NNS professional. Not only must this affirmation form part of the practical side of TESOL education, but it must take its place in

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<sup>1</sup>Each quotation is identified by a pseudonym for the participant, the source (class discussion [CD], letter dialogic [LD], or professional autobiography [PA]), and the date (in 1997).

theory building. As Weedon has convincingly argued, theory “should not deny subjective experience, because the ways in which people make sense of their lives is a necessary starting point for understanding how power relations structure society” (p. 8). The subjective experiences of the nonnative students, therefore, constituted the necessary starting point of the course. Student introductions served more than the usual purpose of a convenient icebreaker. They formed an essential part of the process of mutual empowerment, or the classroom dialogic, by situating the students at the core of the critical dialogic unfolding in the classroom.

## Questioning Medgyes’ Assumptions: Letter Dialogic

A second critical pedagogical tool employed was the written (letter) dialogic with a NNS scholar-professional. As Kramsch and Lam (1999) have argued, the written self is crucial to the construction of an L2 identity. Drawing on Peirce’s (1995) research on ESL immigrant women in Canada, they argue that the “written text constructs, narrows down, clarifies, focuses the truth of the event in quite a different manner than it was lived at the time” (pp. 59–60). That is, the written text provides a sense of reflection, a space to represent “lived experience in the public form,” and develops a “social persona” (pp. 60–61) that enables the L2 writer to assert herself. This written self-representation, they argue, is “associated with the highly self-conscious, rhetorical use of the foreign language by a non-native who, by appropriating for herself a language she views as foreign, actualizes on paper a social reality that was only potentially there” (p. 61). We sought to harness the power of the written text for the purpose of building a “social persona” not built on the identity of an Other in a foreign or second language.

Students were asked to write a written dialogic to Medgyes’ (1994) *The Non-Native Teacher* using a letter format. The author of the book, an EFL professional who is a NNS of English, discusses topics such as “the dark side of being a nonnative,” “the bright side of being a nonnative,” and “who’s worth more: the native or the nonnative” (Samimy, 1997, p. 816). In the “dark side of being a nonnative,” Medgyes focuses on the NNSs’ *linguistic deficit*, in particular in the areas of vocabulary, oral fluency, and pronunciation. The author asserts that nonnative-speaking professionals are well aware of their linguistic disadvantage and that, although hard work and dedication might help them narrow the gap between themselves and NSs, “to achieve native-like proficiency is wishful thinking” (p. 33). In the “bright side of being a non-native,” the author tries to counterbalance the “dark side” by highlighting the qualities of nonnative professionals that are perhaps better than those of NSs, such as being a

good model for the learners, being culturally informed, and being empathetic to learners' needs.

The students recognized the significant contribution that the book had made. One student wrote, "Before I read it, I thought I am not qualified to teach students at any level, even though I will graduate with an MA degree in TESOL" (Monica, LD, February 6). However, they had reservations about the perceived author's overemphasis on the linguistic deficit of the NNS by neglecting other equally significant factors related to the ELT profession.

A student from Japan, for example, wrote, "I am more interested in 'who can do what' rather than 'who is better'" (Leo, LD, February 6). We might interpret this statement as a step toward empowerment. One of the critical aspects of empowerment is what Lather (1991) refers to as "coming into a sense of [one's] own power" (p. 4). Another student began the task of constructing an alternative vision—one of a unified professional identity—in suggesting to Medgyes that

your constant comparison of native versus non-native speaker teacher in the long run may do more harm than good in the sense that the latter may focus more on what separates them from their native speaker counterparts rather than what binds them together. (Tom, LD, February 6)

One student asserted pointedly the often-echoed group sentiment: "By directing the attention of the nonnative professional into the native like proficiency, the whole profession has been very much distressed because we ended up complaining about our inability to have native like proficiency" (Carl, LD, February 6).

Although articulating the perceived problems in the classroom context and in the written dialogic was an important step for many students in taking a more critical approach, for many this articulation began to transform into a deeper understanding of the contexts in which English is taught and of their search for alternatives. As one student reflected,

In EFL settings like in Korea, most English teachers in public schools are non-native speakers of English. Though it seems obvious that they have some advantages over native speakers, many of the parents and students wish to have native speakers. Many of them may know that a native speaker is not an ideal teacher. But they just feel and think that way and, therefore, want native speakers as their teachers? . . . How can I convince them that I may be a better teacher than a native speaker? (Steve, LD, February 6)

Such a quest for a solution represents a significant stage toward what Simon (1987) calls "empowerment as a pedagogy of possibility." Simon comments that "a curriculum and its supporting pedagogy are a version of our own dreams for ourselves, our children, and our communities" (p.



370). It might also be interpreted in terms of what Lather (1991) refers to as finding a “new relationship with [one’s] own contexts” (p. 4) during the process of empowerment.

The written dialogic with a NNS colleague served to stimulate this process of self-discovery and empowerment. Some students came to the realization that the key to empowerment lay within themselves. One of the students from West Africa remarked, “As a non-native teacher myself, I feel that general guilt of silence that many of my colleagues probably feel in exactly the same way” (Mike, LD, February 6). His West African colleague contextualized this observation more generally:

Since the colonial times when the inner circle and the outer circle schools took the same end-of-year exams (at least in Britain’s and France’s colonies), the outer circle (former colonies) haven’t stopped looking up to the inner circle and emulating their curricula and standards. (John, PA, March 13)

Although this observation may appear to be a lingering example of a colonial cultural relationship, the articulation thereof constitutes an important aspect of critical praxis in ELT. One of the keys to change is the development of an alternative vision, for, as Simon (1987) notes, “Education always presupposes a vision of the future” (p. 371).

Overall, participants increasingly recognized the multidimensionality of the ELT professional; significantly, they linked the notion of success in the profession to the dynamics and demands of a particular sociocultural and linguistic context, allowing for sociocultural and individual flexibility and pluralism in the profession.

## The Professional Autobiography: Tracing Evolving Identities

The professional autobiography allowed the students to reflect upon their lived experiences, thereby empowering them through the building of textual identity (Kramsch & Lam, 1999) and the development of a professional voice in an L2. A Korean student’s essay exemplified this process:

While trying to sort through the different experiences I have had for this paper, I realized that there is a complex relationship between what I have experienced and my reflection of these experiences . . . . My view of myself as a nonnative professional has not been . . . . stable or settled . . . . The term “identity” permits sufficient conceptual elasticity to capture [these] complicated aspects of the issue. (Daniel, PA, March 13)

This student’s analysis of himself as a professional echoes Peirce’s (1995) discussion of social identity, which stresses that it is “multiple, a site of

struggle, and changing over time” (p. 14). Thus, the professional autobiography, by asking the students to reflect over the course of their entire professional career and growth as English speakers, is part of the process of constructing an identity for themselves as TESOL professionals.

The social construct of nonnativeness assigns to the L2 speaker the identity of a permanent learner, meaning that the self-construction of identity requires deconstructing the social values imposing the former conception. Several students grappled with this problem in relation to the EFL context. One wrote,

One of the first things that I would like to convince Korean teachers of English of is the belief that they are not necessarily inferior (or superior) teachers of EFL. I want learners of English to have a sense of ownership and empowerment over their English learning; I do not want them to feel as if they are second-class people, vis-à-vis the so-called NS of English. . . . As Kachru (1992) argues, it’s time the perceptions regarding ownership of English reflect usage in reality. I want “NNSs” to claim their rightful ownership to English. (Steve, PA, March 13)

Students reflected on and analyzed the complex issues that faced them in their professional lives. Perhaps more important, they thought critically about not only their experiences but also the context of their professional lives. In the following passage, a student problematizes easy classification, deconstructs the academic discourse of NS-NNS, and finds a basis for a counterdiscourse:

The NS-NNS dichotomy debate . . . is a purposeless waste of resources. For instance, the debate of who makes a better teacher, a NNS or a NS, is an academic question. Not only is the distinction difficult, if not impossible, to operationalize, one group of users is not categorically superior to the other when it comes to teaching English.

The majority of teachers of English in the world, and certainly in Korea, will continue to be NNSs. Thus, the question, “How can NNS teachers become more like NS teachers?” misses the point. The guiding question in EFL teacher development in Korea must acknowledge the real status of the teacher pool. Thus, the question must be more practical, and, in a deeper sense, more philosophical, which can be stated as: “How can the present and future teachers be helped to become all they can be as *Korean people who teach English to other Korean people*?” (Carl, PA, March 13)

It would be simplifying matters, however, to say that every student came to such conclusions or that the process of overcoming the disempowering discourses was linear. A significant minority continued to express adherence to a belief in the superiority of the NS. One student wrote in his autobiography,

I may let my son learn grammar and/or reading from non-native teachers. However, I myself, frankly speaking, would not hire a non-native English teacher to teach conversational English to my son. Many people would argue against the idea, but I will not change my mind . . . I simply cannot accept that non-native English teachers in general have a high level of proficiency enough to teach speaking to other non-natives. I don't believe that I, another non-native teacher, can successfully teach conversational English. (Paul, PA, March 13)

For other students, however, the seemingly overwhelming nature of the obstacles facing them began to lessen over the course of the term. For instance, early in the quarter a Japanese student professed great pessimism: "How do students perceive their non-native speaking teachers and native speaking teachers? Do they treat them both equally? No! Their attitudes toward non-native teachers further my helplessness. Thus my suffering as a language teacher will continue forever" (Andrew, CD, January 30). But by the end of the course, he was more encouraged, noting that he now felt that with study and time, "the issue of native vs. nonnative will become a very, very minor problem to me, though it does not disappear completely" (Andrew, PA, March 13). If one of the aspects of empowerment involves "analyzing ideas about the causes of powerlessness" (Lather, 1991, p. 4), then for this student, as for many others, the 10-week critical praxis provided a space to voice some of the disempowering attitudes coming from the learners.

## Becoming Researchers and Agents of Change

One interesting theme that emerged from the course is the roles that the participants believed they could play as professionals in TESOL. At that point in their careers, generally, the participants did not perceive themselves as active, contributing members in the field. But they also expressed a strong desire to take matters into their own hands and to become themselves, as one student put it, agents of change:

As far as I am concerned, I intend to capitalize on the experience I have gained to contribute more in research relating to language teaching and learning . . . It is high time non-native teachers began getting more involved in linguistic research and publications. Non-native speaking teachers should let their voice be heard. Our contribution is indispensable. (John, PA, March 13)

One of his colleagues was more specific about his intentions:

It is crucial to make EFL autonomous, by encouraging local research with teachers (action research), collaborating with other researchers to establish

an EFL knowledge base. My ultimate ambition is to have EFL research gain authority at the international level. I might start by establishing an EFL network at the West-African level. (Daniel, PA, March 13)

When the participants were asked about their contributions to ELT, many of them talked about their role as teacher educators upon their return to their home countries. Some of their future agendas included (a) insisting on the distinction between teaching in the ESL and EFL contexts so that textbooks and teaching methodology are situated in local contextual conditions (cf. Widdowson, 1996); (b) empowering EFL teachers so that they develop critical awareness toward received wisdom (Nayar, 1997; Pennycook, 1990) and challenge the appropriateness of imported materials according to their settings and their students' needs; and (c) creating opportunities for in-service teachers to work with English users from various English-speaking countries, such as India, Singapore, and the Philippines, to promote the notion of English as an international language.

The semistructured interviews held toward the end of the course provided additional support for findings of increases in the participants' critical awareness of the issues related to NNS professionals and in their recognition of their unique contributions to the field. The question of whether NSs or NNSs are better language teachers was often voiced as irrelevant, if not counterproductive. A more relevant question, according to the participants, is how qualified they are as EFL/ESL teachers or what kind of expertise they can offer. Rampton (1990) suggests that "the notion of experts shifts the emphasis from 'who you are' to 'what you know'" (p. 99). This construct of *expertise*, then, diminishes the marginalization of NNS professionals and challenges the notion that the ideal teacher of English is a NS (cf. Phillipson, 1992). On the whole, although the construct of NS was psychologically real in the participants' consciousness, its essence and significance in ELT was left open for further discussion.

In addition, course evaluations revealed

1. an increased level of awareness among students about themselves and other international professionals, including geopolitical issues in EFL contexts (e.g., Asian countries vs. West African countries);
2. a new sense of group identity;
3. an emphasis on means of contributing to other international professionals' careers.

Students' comments reflected some of the disempowering practice that goes on in ESOL teacher education. Rather than empowering NNESTs as ELT professionals, many aspects of current TESOL practice may unconsciously reinforce Western cultural hegemony (Norton, 1997)

in teacher education classrooms, unwittingly silencing multicultural voices and domesticating them into an ESL ethos.

An example might be the naming practices that separate NNS English professionals from their NS counterparts. As Weedon (1997) contends, language is “the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed” (p. 21). In the effort to combat this dichotomizing and disempowering discursive practice, we put forward the construct *international English professional* to replace the NS-NNS dichotomy.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ESOL TEACHER EDUCATION

The seminar also charted new directions for research that investigates some of the issues related to the development of English as an international language and the emerging concerns within the area of ESOL teacher education that programs with a significant international student presence might address:

1. the reexamination of NNS professionals’ experiences through their self-representation, exploring how their goals and values contribute to the shaping of the international professional;
2. the adoption of discursive practices and paradigms in TESOL that place NNS professionals at the center rather than at the periphery by discarding the native-nonnative dichotomy as the main construct through which they are conceived;
3. the exploration of the diversity of the international English professionals’ experience from ESL and EFL contexts, so that the ESOL teacher preparation program’s goals are balanced between the two;
4. the drawing of implications for SLA and teacher education in different international contexts.

The consensus of the participants in the study was that differences between ESL and EFL are neither well articulated nor reflected in TESOL theory and practice. As such, a finding of the present study is that, because EFL posits different challenges for English teachers, further research is needed to articulate the differences between EFL and ESL contexts in the eyes of international EFL professionals. This insight highlights the importance of examining the role of international English professionals in both the ESL and the EFL contexts.

## CONCLUSION

Drawing on Pennycook's (1998) analysis of English and the discourses of colonialism as well as on the data in the present study, we find that the construct of nativeness in ELT has a lived reality in postcolonialism. As we have shown, it is a site of struggle for many nonnative-English-speaking professionals. It indeed might be a product of a colonial European culture that still resonates in the practice and theory of ELT. Although many prominent scholars have pointed out its problematic nature, the construct of nativeness has remained at the center of much recent analysis.

The present study aimed at a reexamination of the question of NNESTs at the theoretical level and provided a practical approach to the empowerment of the NNEST. Toward this end, we drew on the principles of Freire's (1993) critical pedagogy and Weedon's (1997) theory of subjectivity. The underlying argument of our critical praxis was that if critical pedagogy is to lead to change and empowerment, we can no longer promote only the existing approaches to the study of the question. In particular, we argue that it is critical to address this side of ELT education within an ESOL teacher preparation program and develop new conceptual tools. As such, the issues involved in nativeness must first be articulated through the experiences and self-representation of both NNESTs and native-English-speaking teachers to challenge the professional boundaries and their ideological basis. As the present study has shown, it is critical to raise consciousness about the role of international teachers of English in the field and validate the tools for their empowerment. Empowerment, as Lather (1991) argues, constitutes "people coming into a sense of their own power, a new relationship with their own contexts" (p. 2). Although achieving such empowerment remains complex, this study demonstrated that many of the students found a new relationship with their contexts, analyzed the causes of their powerlessness, and generated a new sense of agency. We conclude that new critical approaches that reexamine such basic constructs need to become part of ESOL teacher education and research within a TESOL curriculum.

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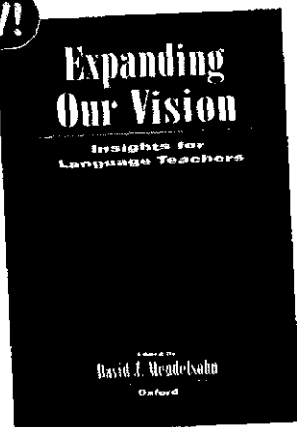
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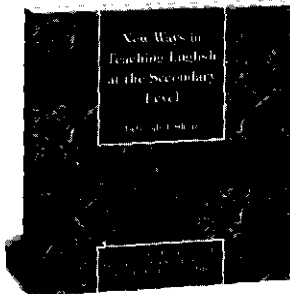
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# Critical Pedagogy in ELT: Images of Brazilian Teachers of English

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Recently, some scholars inside the English language teaching (ELT) community have started to question the absence of a critical view in the teaching and role of English internationally. More specifically, they have attempted to encourage ESL/EFL teachers to address such sociopolitical issues as the alleged neutrality of English as an international language. They argue for a critical pedagogy that would encourage pedagogical practices aiming to empower teachers and learners, and consequently to change the nature of schooling and transform society. Considering that critical pedagogy has its roots in the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, we investigated what 40 Brazilian English teachers knew about and thought of critical pedagogy in ELT. Our findings showed that they were unaware of it. Attached to the strong appeal of a dominant integrative discourse, the English teachers saw themselves as agents of good in that they prepared students to be successful in the world. In view of the fact that Brazil's new National Curriculum Parameter is based on critical pedagogical assumptions, we wonder how such a pedagogy might operate in this particular context.

In recent years, some language scholars (Auerbach, 1991; Judd, 1987; Peirce, 1989; Pennycook, 1994, 1995; Phillipson, 1992) have tried to intensify the discussion of the political and sociocultural implications that permeate English language teaching (ELT). Their major concern is with the dominant discourse in ELT that considers the expansion and internationalization of English as natural, neutral, and beneficial (Pennycook, 1994).

According to Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994), the absence of a critical view toward the teaching and role of English internationally seems to be a result of English teachers' submission to applied linguistics, which has emphasized principally formal and methodological issues. Based on discourse analysis, these authors argue for a critical applied linguistics and pedagogy in which languages are intimately linked to socioeconomic powers. From this viewpoint, teachers should address the

question, What does it mean to learn English in light of current global power relationships? English teachers should be aware of the political dimension in ELT and mistrust underlying ideologies that construct the global nature of English as neutral. They should critically evaluate the implications of their practice in the production and reproduction of social inequalities (Pennycook, 1994).

In Brazil, as in other countries, a few scholars inside the ELT community have begun to engage themselves in an academic debate about the putative neutrality of ELT and the need to consider the social and political implications of ELT in Brazil (see Moita Lopes, 1996; Souza, 1992). This movement toward critical pedagogy has started inside academia. Despite the effort to launch a national discussion about it (the theme of the last National Meeting of University Professors of English in 1997 was "Social and Political Implications for ELT in Brazil"), debates have been very few and very weak. Nevertheless, a government committee (composed of university professors who supported critical pedagogy) established the new National Curriculum Parameters (NCP; Secretaria de Educação Fundamental, 1998) based on critical pedagogy. According to the new NCP, the learning of English can be meaningful only if it contributes to the critical mind: "A aprendizagem de inglês, tendo em vista o seu papel hegemônico nas trocas internacionais . . . , pode colaborar na formulação de contra-discursos em relação às desigualdades entre países e entre grupos sociais" (The learning of English, considering its hegemonic role in international exchanges . . . , can contribute to the formulation of counter-discourses in relation to inequalities between countries and social groups) (p. 40).

Obviously, the conception underlying the new NCP is based on critical pedagogy. The fact that this educational reform was hatched in academia and delivered as a ready-made package to elementary and secondary teachers raises the research question, What do English teachers know about and think of critical pedagogy?

This study is organized into five sections. Initially, referring to Paulo Freire's work, we report on how the movement of critical pedagogy has developed in the field of L1 and L2 teaching in Brazil. Secondly, we describe our research methodology. After reporting the teachers' responses, we interpret the findings based upon discourse analysis. We conclude with a few reflective comments in an attempt to intensify the discussion of critical pedagogy by introducing important aspects of ELT that have been neglected in Brazil.

## CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN BRAZIL

### Birth and Rebirth

Evoking the Brazilian trajectory of critical pedagogy in the field of language, we cannot help remembering that Brazil is the land of Freire, a seminal thinker of critical pedagogy. Freire embodied the organic intellectual that Gramsci (1971) wrote about. Having endured the violence of the ruling oligarchies that exploit people's ignorance, he saw in education one path to liberation. In the early 1960s, he became involved in the Folk Culture Movement of Recife as the coordinator for the Project for Adult Literacy, directly confronting the endemic illiteracy of the region's residents. Teaching this population the basic skills of reading and writing was an imperative for Freire. He dismissed the hypothesis of teaching by rote; instead, he thought of literacy as a process in which people, historically situated, are central and viewed as agents.

For Freire (1982, 1984), critical pedagogy had a deep existential meaning. As the educator of the oppressed, he relentlessly reaffirmed that education is a political act that, if not viewed as such, begins to surreptitiously legitimize and reproduce the politics of the dominant classes, perpetuating social inequalities. For his ideas and practices, Freire was imprisoned and later exiled with other intellectuals considered insurgents by the dictatorial regime installed by the military coup of 1964. The path of critical pedagogy in Brazil was obstructed. As Brandão (1981) synthesizes, "em tempo de baioneta a carta que se cale" (in time of bayonets the spelling book should be silenced) (p. 19).

The return of the exiled counterhegemonic intellectuals, made possible by the Law of Amnesty of 1979, invigorated the Brazilian universities. Never had the word *critical* been spoken so much (critical consciousness, critical attitude, critical education, critical teacher, critical student, critical reading, critical analysis). Similarly, never had the word *ideology* been applied so widely (bourgeois ideology, capitalist ideology, dominant ideology, ideological apparatus of state, counterideology). The politicized intellectuals acted as if they were agents of consciousness, uncovering relations of power where they had not usually been perceived. They told the truth to those who did not see it and to those who could not say it.

In its rebirth, critical pedagogy turned into a movement that preserved very little from its original popular roots. The movement was located mainly in the prestigious universities that embraced Freire on his return. It was dominated not by organic intellectuals like Freire but by critical intellectuals (Giroux, 1992, p. 34), who crossed Brazil resowing

the seeds of critical pedagogy. The movement radiated from the center to the periphery, through the enlightened word of the intellectuals, and was passed on in meetings, conferences, congresses, and diverse publications.

In the early 1980s, with the resurgence of critical pedagogy, professors of Portuguese, linguists, scholars, and discourse analysts also started to pay attention to history, power, ideology, politics, social class, critical consciousness, and empowerment. Looking through these lenses uncovered many hidden facets of the linguistic phenomenon. The ideological character of the allegedly neutral Portuguese (L1) being taught in school became evident. Language started to be seen as a contradictory and unequal set of linguistic varieties whose value was defined not by intrinsic but by extrinsic characteristics, that is, by the social, political, economic, and cultural position of the speaker. The acknowledgment that the Portuguese taught in schools was the standard variety, raised to the category of “*the language*” by a process of universalization of the ideology, radically altered the discourse about its teaching. A knowledge of the standard variety is still seen as important but is not viewed as an unconditional necessity. The learning of Portuguese is necessary as a fighting strategy in which the weapons of the dominators are used against them. It is the artfulness of the oppressed in action.

The rebirth of critical pedagogy in Brazil coincided with the flourishing of discourse analysis, which, against the grain of orthodox linguistics, refuses to divorce language from social-historical-ideological conditions of production. According to Pêcheux and Fuchs (1975), discourse analysis embraces (a) historic materialism as a theory of social formations and its transformations (i.e., a theory of ideologies); (b) linguistics as a theory of mechanisms of syntax and processes of enunciation; and (c) a theory of discourse as a theory of historical determination of semantic processes. Without difficulty, discourse analysis, especially as practiced by the French School, fit in well with critical pedagogy in the teaching of the mother tongue, in which the focus changed from grammar toward the text. The interpretation and composition of texts thus earned a place in the teaching of the mother tongue. Either as readers or as writers, students were idealized as historical agents of the transformation of society.

## English Teaching and Critical Pedagogy

In its second phase, critical pedagogy mainly fertilized the imagination of academics involved with the mother tongue. Teachers of English stayed on the sidelines of the movement and were labeled by their colleagues (teachers of literature, Portuguese, and history) as alienated,

acritical, apolitical, reactionary, right-wing stooges of U.S. imperialism. Among politicized intellectuals, English teachers were suspected of having sold their souls to the devil.

English teachers at all levels were touched neither by critical pedagogy nor by the social-historical-ideological vision of language posited by French discourse analysis. Instead, they were influenced by the discourse analysis of the Anglo-Saxon school, whose focus was on daily conversation and culture. Drawing upon the notion of *communicative competence* (Hymes, 1972), in the late 1970s English teachers who were advocates of communicative language teaching broke with the practice of having students recite decontextualized and memorized dialogues without social meaning. They started to argue for the teaching of a functional L2 ability that included not only grammatical rules but also the pragmatic competence necessary for the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning in the immediate context of speech.

After reigning almost absolutely for two decades, the communicative approach started to be criticized by some scholars in Brazil, following a worldwide tendency in the field of ELT. Feeling a certain discomfort, professors on various continents began to mistrust the good intentions underlying communicative language teaching, which guides learners to negotiate intentional meanings through conversational strategies (see, e.g., Kramsch, 1991). They became disillusioned with a vision of teaching as centered on the development of oral ability and with a vision of learning English as acquiring linguistic and communicative competence without a political, ideological dimension.<sup>1</sup>

Moita Lopes (1996), for example, questions the pacifying and harmonious character of teaching English as a way to know and interact with another culture. He believes that teaching based on integrative motivation (the desire to identify with another culture) and emphasizing oral skills should be reviewed in Brazil. Moita Lopes argues that the teaching of reading based on instrumental motivation is more appropriate for Brazilian learners, who generally do not have the opportunity to talk to native speakers but find it necessary to read English.

Similarly, other Brazilian English teachers have insisted on changing the focus in ELT from conversation to reading through a teaching methodology centered on written texts, mimicking the change in L1 teaching. In L1 teaching, however, the need to teach reading was anchored on a political rationale, whereas in ELT it has been mainly anchored on a pragmatic rationale. Instrumental reading is seen as a

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<sup>1</sup> In Brazil, this discomfort led university English professors to approach the field of L1 teaching, in which critical conceptions of pedagogy had been present since the late 1970s. Though these discussions were enthusiastic in academia, they did not effectively reach the language classroom (see Coracini, 1995).

form of escape from the effects of assimilation and acculturation inherent in communicative language teaching and integrative motivation. If the expansion of English in the world is considered not the mere expansion of a language but also the expansion of a set of discourses in which ideas of development, democracy, capitalism, neoliberalism, and modernization circulate (Pennycook, 1994, 1995), the instrumental reading orientation of English teaching is only a Trojan horse. After all, nothing conforms more to these discourses than the pragmatism of learning to read in English in order to access information, technology, and so on. The discourse in favor of the instrumental orientation provides a release from subjugation by a located and tangible culture and leads to another subjugation by an intangible and scattered plot of discourses that have promoted the Westernization of the world for more than two millennia. The source of Westernization has changed from Greece, to Rome, to Spain, to England, and finally to the United States. According to Pennycook (1995), the spread of English and the spread of these discourses feed upon each other.

When we look at the history and present conjunction of English and many discourses of global power, it seems certain that those discourses have been facilitative of the spread of English and that the spread of English has facilitated the spread of those discourses. It is in this sense that the world is in English. The potential meanings that can be articulated in English are interlinked with the discourses of development, democracy, capitalism, modernization, and so on. (pp. 52–53)

In these discourses English is subliminally represented as a universal language, a lingua franca, and a tool of communication between non-English cultures. According to Pennycook (1994), the spread of English is considered to be natural, neutral, and beneficial: natural because it is the inevitable result of global forces; neutral because it assumes that English has been stripped of its original cultural contexts and has been transformed into a transparent, universal medium of communication; and beneficial because it is a condition for cooperation and equality (p. 9). He demystifies this apolitical representation of the neutrality of English as a worldwide language.

If English today is a language through which the forces of neocolonialism operate, then counterdiscourses need to be articulated in English. Pennycook (1994) is optimistic regarding this possibility; to him people are not passive consumers of hegemonic cultural forms. He believes that a critical pedagogy sensitive to students' voices may encourage them to produce a counterdiscourse. He adds that English teachers cannot reduce their teaching to social-psychological notions of motivation, methodology, or linguistic questions. Language is embedded in socioeconomic and political struggles that cannot be left out of the classroom. To

treat English as a neutral language of global communication is convenient, but if we want “to teach ethically our teaching practices and philosophies need to oppose such a view” (p. 301). Those who teach English must

1. doubt and be critical of the dominant discourse that represents the internationalization of English as good and as a passport to the first world;
2. consider the relationship of their work to the spread of the language, critically evaluating the implications of their practice in the production and reproduction of social inequalities;
3. question whether they are contributing to the perpetuation of domination.

According to Pennycook (1995, p. 55), the English teacher should be aware of the implications of the spread of English for the reproduction and production of global inequalities as well as be a political agent engaged in a project of critical pedagogy that helps the student to articulate in English counterdiscourses to the dominant discourse of the West.

Critical pedagogy as postulated by Pennycook is little known or followed in Brazil. Few professors of English discuss it in their research. Although the conception of ELT formulated by critical pedagogy circulates primarily in academia, government agencies appropriated it in the educational reform of 1997. Taking into account the historical alienation of teachers of English in Brazil and the fact that the new NCP has established that teachers of English should do critical pedagogy in the classroom, we set up this study to investigate their knowledge of critical pedagogy.

## METHOD

To find out what English teachers know about and think of critical pedagogy, we collected empirical data by means of two types of instruments. First, an interview in Portuguese (audio recorded and later transcribed; see the Appendix) inquired about their teaching approach, their view of critical pedagogy, and the way they saw themselves politically as English teachers. The small number of questions did not impede the subjects from introducing their own topics. If the topics were relevant to the study, we encouraged elaboration. Second, subjects commented on and related two written passages in English (see the Appendix), one about integrative motivation (Baker, 1993, p. 90, based on Gardner & Lambert’s 1972 theories of integrative and instrumental motivations) and the other about political motivation (Pennycook, 1994, p. 311).



The English teachers who participated in the study worked in Cuiabá or in neighboring towns in the state of Mato Grosso, situated in midwestern Brazil. The group included 6 university professors, 12 teachers at private foreign language schools, and 22 teachers at elementary and secondary schools, for a total of 40 teachers (7 males, 33 females). Many people who teach English there are not effectively English teachers. Elsewhere (Cox & Assis-Peterson, in press) we identify two groups of English teachers in elementary and secondary schools: those who are “real” English teachers (a minority) and those who are temporarily teaching English (a majority). The latter group consists of teachers who have a degree in other disciplines and teach English simply as a way to complete their weekly schedule. Our sample excluded these seasonal teachers. We selected only teachers who had a degree in English and worked effectively in the field. Therefore, although this sample was small, we believe it is representative of English teachers in Brazil.

We analyzed the data based on some of the French School’s principles of discourse analysis. With Foucault (1986), we conceive “discourse as a set of statements supported in a same discursive formation” (p. 135). *Discursive formation* refers to all systems of rules that regard the unity of a set of statements as socially and historically circumscribed. A discourse or a discursive formation never exists independently but is inherently an interdiscourse, in the sense that it articulates different discursive formations in relation to different ideological formations. Political and ideological positions do not emerge directly from individuals but from a complex of ideological and discursive formations that maintain relations of antagonism, alliance, and domination among themselves.

From these assumptions, we organized our data based on the principle of paraphrase, because in the interior of a discourse formation, synonymy is possible (i.e., statements that are different at the signifying level can be similar at the signified level). We constructed families of statements so that we could examine the profile of ideological formations that materialized in the discursive practice of teachers. By analyzing the data, we intended to uncover (a) the place of critical pedagogy and its effects of meaning in the discourse of Brazilian English teachers in the current historical and social context and (b) the relations of power among discursive formations at play in the discursive field of ELT today.

## FINDINGS

### Interview 1

When asked what kind of approach they used in their classrooms, most teachers (30) reported that they used a communicative approach,

with a focus mainly on culturally situated, daily conversation; 5 said they used an essentially linguistic approach, with a focus on the reading and writing skills, that is, on grammar-translation; and the other 5 pointed to a critical discursive approach, with a focus on the underlying ideological aspects of ELT.

Although most of the teachers said that they did not do critical pedagogy, we asked them whether they had at least heard of it. The majority (35) said that they had not. They were unaware of debates about the topic in different parts of the world (“Nunca ouvi falar sobre isso” [I have never heard of it; P38, I1, May 27, p. 88]); “Eu não sei o que que é pedagogia crítica” [I don’t know what critical pedagogy is; P5, I1, March 11, p. 10]).<sup>2</sup> Some had heard of critical pedagogy (“Já ouvi falar mas não li nada sobre isso” [I’ve heard of it but I haven’t read about it; P10, I1, March 28, p. 22]; “Já vi como título mas não conheço a essência” [I saw it as a headline but I do not know the essence; P11, I1, March 30, p. 24), but they had not been affected by it.

Among the five who mentioned that they used a critical discourse approach, only two seemed to interpret it in the sense that we describe in this article. They acknowledged the political dimension of ELT; Brazil’s economical, political, and cultural dependence on the United States; the global nature of the language; and the need to mistrust the underlying ideologies: “Quando falamos sobre pedagogia crítica na sala de aula, devemos falar sobre o que está por trás do inglês, qual é a ideologia, a subordinação aos países ricos . . . , mostrar esta realidade” (When we talk about critical pedagogy in the classroom, we should talk about what underlies English, which is the ideology, the subordination to the rich countries . . . , to show this reality; P2, I1, March 5, p. 4). The other three interpreted critical pedagogy as teaching that involves constant evaluation and reflection. To be critical, in this sense, is to oppose the mechanical. Critical teachers are aware of what they do; they control the teaching and learning process to the extent that it can be changed whenever necessary. The critical teacher is, above all, self-critical, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

Hoje a minha aula não foi boa, meus alunos não se saíram bem, mas o que eu fiz? . . . ela faz você refletir sobre a sua própria ação e modificar o seu método, é tentar entender melhor o que está acontecendo. (Critical pedagogy means to think about, today my class was not good, my student did not do well, but what did I do? . . . it makes you reflect on your own action and modify your methods, it is to try to understand better what is happening.) (P13, I1, April 5, p. 29)

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<sup>2</sup> Excerpts from interviews are identified by the participant (P1, P2, etc.), the interview (I1 or I2), the date (in 1998), and the transcript page.

After we explained critical pedagogy to them, the teachers tended to interpret it as a kind of contextualized teaching that takes into account the culture of the learner and the culture of the target language and that considers differences among cultures in a relative manner (i.e., cultures are different, but they are not inferior or superior).

Eu acho que é muito importante quando você está aprendendo uma outra língua trabalhar com a cultura, mas você tem que respeitar as diferenças; você não vai dizer para o aluno que os Estados Unidos é melhor do que o Brasil; o ponto é dizer aos alunos que há coisas diferentes na vida cotidiana, é uma questão de analisar e perceber as diferenças sem julgar se uma cultura é pior ou melhor do que a outra. (I think it is very important when you are learning another language to work with culture, but you have to respect the differences; you are not going to say to the student that the United States is better than Brazil; the point is to tell the students that there are different things in the daily life; it is a matter of analyzing and perceiving the differences without judging whether one is worse or better than the other.) (P6, I1, May 5, p. 60)

The teachers understood culture as habits, customs, and behavior without value judgments, that is, without considering the relations of force that exist when cultures interact. They viewed language and culture as a body of conscious knowledge to be transmitted by explicit instruction. The English teachers did not automatically consider themselves as teaching a culture. The culture of the target language was primarily an object to be contemplated and to be introduced to students through the argument that cultures are different but equal.

When asked how they perceived themselves politically as English teachers, the participants reported that they did not see themselves as colonized or colonizers. Analysis of the data showed that they saw themselves as altruistic agents of good, in that they prepared students to be successful in the international world. If the international world uses English, students must be prepared to communicate in that language, as one subject said: “Há três tipos de analfabetos: o que não saber ler nem escrever, o que não sabe informática, e o que não sabe inglês” (There are three kinds of illiterate people: the one who does not know how to read or write, the one who does not know how to use the computer, and the one who does not know English; P27, I1, May 5, p. 60). In the present world, they see the mission of English teachers as equally important as the mission of the literacy teacher.

In relation to the images others might have had of them, the participants said that to be an English teacher was a symbol of status and prestige. The English teachers felt they were respected, valued, and admired, and they were proud of the profession they had chosen. They said others saw them in a positive light:

O professor de inglês tem mais status do que o de matemática, de história, sinto isso quando converso com outros professores, eles dizem: “Ah, você é professor de inglês, que legal!”, as pessoas associam o fato de você conhecer uma língua com status. (The English teacher has more social status than a math teacher, a history teacher, I feel this when I talk to other teachers. They say, “Ah, you’re an English teacher, cool!” People associate the fact that you know another language with status.) (P11, I1, March 30, p. 24)

Eu me sinto valorizada, respeitada; a profissão tem prestígio, respeitabilidade; meus alunos têm uma imagem bonita, positiva, eles me respeitam. (I feel I am respected, valued; the profession has prestige, respectability; my students have a beautiful, positive image; they respect me.) (P12, I1, April 2, p. 26)

However, some participants were aware that, at universities, a negative image of English teachers as naive agents of evil persisted. They said that professors (especially of literature and Portuguese) viewed them with suspicion and stigmatized them with labels such as *alienated*, *not politicized*, *colonized*, *submissive to imperialism*, and *fools*.

Uma vez, um professor de literatura de universidade disse, “Você é muito inteligente, você não deveria tá fazendo inglês, por que você não faz literatura? Literatura dá mais visão de mundo, inglês é muito mecanicista, muito imperialista.” Disse em tom de brincadeira, mas acho que por trás da ironia existia uma convicção. (Once a literature professor told me, “You are very smart, you shouldn’t be taking English, why don’t you do literature? Literature provides you with a better view of the world, English is very mechanical, very imperialistic.” He said that as if it was a joke, but I think that under the irony there was a conviction.) (P13, I1, April 5, p. 30)

When asked how they reacted to these stigmas, the participants claimed to be unaffected. They exempted themselves from the discourses of the politicized professors by means of expressions like “Não me incomoda de forma alguma” (I don’t mind at all; P10, I1, March 28, p. 22), “Não me importo que dizem que eu vendi a alma para o diabo” (I don’t care whether they say I sold my soul to the devil; P14, I1, April 7, p. 31). They shrugged off the labels without getting into the heart of the debate, perhaps aware of the threat this debate might represent to their absolute devotion to English, expressed unanimously through such affective language as “tá no sangue” (it is in the blood; P14, I1, April 7, p. 31), “eu amo” (I love it; P10, I1, March 28, p. 22), “é paixão” (it’s passion; P20, I1, April 17, p. 42), “Eu me envolvo” (I got involved; P38, I1, May 27, p. 88).

These answers to the third interview question contradicted our expectations. As professors, we expected that most teachers would feel the stigma of being seen as alienated, colonized, or agents of U.S. power.

## Interview 2: Reactions to Written Passages

Our second instrument was designed to probe the issue of conflict between identification and dissociation, approximation and estrangement, attraction and repulsion, and love and hate in relation to L2 culture and the way teachers deal with it in classrooms. As we did not observe the participants in the classroom, we encouraged the teachers to relate their memories. They revealed that conflict emerged frequently in the classroom when students questioned why English was an obligatory subject: “Por que falantes de português se vêem obrigados a aprender inglês, e falantes de inglês não se vêem obrigados a aprender português?” (Why do we have to learn English if they do not have to worry about learning Portuguese?; P7, I2, March 17, p. 14), “Por que tenho que aprender inglês se não vou viajar para o estrangeiro?” (Why do I have to learn English if I am not going to travel abroad?; P11, I2, March 30, p. 25); “Por que inglês e não uma outra língua?” (Why English and not another language?; P3, I2, March 8, p. 6). We asked the teachers what they usually said on these occasions. Many teachers reconstructed such episodes by recalling dialogues they had had with students:

Student: Why do we have to learn English if there they do not have to worry about learning Portuguese?

Teacher: Our neighbor, Argentina, when a student completes the eighth grade, he is speaking English, French, and another foreign language. We are worried about learning Spanish, [but] the Argentine who is our neighbor is not worried about learning Portuguese . . . . We have to study a language so that we can compete as equals. (P7, I2, March 17, p. 15)

The student's question calls for a discussion of the relationships of international forces, but the teacher seems to sidestep the question. First, she argues that in Argentina (a competing neighbor) students learn foreign languages. Then she evokes the ghost of Spanish, which haunts the space of other foreign languages in Brazil, where English reigned absolutely until the advent of Mercosul.<sup>3</sup> Finally, she seeks to persuade the student indirectly not to be misled by Spanish, crowning her argument with a pragmatic reason for choosing English over another language (“We have to study a language so that we can compete as equals”). The political dimension of the unequal game of forces that permeates the relations between Portuguese and English and between Portuguese and Spanish does not emerge. Why do speakers of Portuguese feel obliged to learn English whereas speakers of English do not

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<sup>3</sup> A free trade agreement among Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

feel obliged to learn Portuguese? Why do speakers of Portuguese worry more about learning Spanish whereas speakers of Spanish worry less about learning Portuguese? These questions of imminent political nature were silenced by arguments of pragmatic order.

In another example, a teacher again uses the pragmatic function of English as an international language (e.g., one needs English to travel to the United States, play video games, read manuals) as a trump card that could be used to oppose potential resistance by students:

- Student: Why do I have to learn English if I am not travelling to the United States?
- Teacher: Look, you do not need to learn English only to travel to the United States. Don't you play video games? The manuals are all in English, don't you need to read to find out how to play?
- Student: But I already know that.
- Teacher: OK, that is good step. Now we are going to improve, you are going to learn more.
- Student: Oh, OK. (P37, I2, May 22, p. 85)

The teacher answers the student's question by saying that English has come to them and that they do not need to go to it. However, the student rejects her argument that he might need English to play video games. The teacher then tries another strategy to silence him (to value what he already knows). The student's last reply shows that he either is persuaded by the teacher or has retreated. At least an apparent solution is achieved.

Although one teacher confessed to avoiding these discussions ("I always attempt to change that kind of discussion not because of disbelieving its importance but because I want them to use the target language in the classroom, and for this I have to monitor the dialogues"; P4, I2, March 10, p. 8), another mentioned that teachers usually attempted to avoid such topics, sensing that they might generate a rejection of English, with inevitable repercussions for themselves and their institutions:

There are teachers who are familiar with the social, economic, and political aspects of the language, but they fear that this kind of analysis may create or stimulate an aversion to the target language on the part of some students, and this is not interesting for teachers and institutions. Besides this, critical students are a problem for many teachers. (P8, I2, May 22, p. 85)

Notes of student dissension that inevitably arise in the English classroom were quickly muffled by teachers. After all, nobody wants to see the object of a life's work held up for scrutiny and found wanting.

## DISCURSIVE FORMATIONS AT PLAY: INTEGRATION OR EMPOWERMENT?

Analyzing the data, we noticed a struggle between two discourses in the field of ELT: integrative discourse (ID), linked to an ideological formation of neoliberalism, and empowering discourse (ED), linked to a more socialist, ethical ideological formation. The struggle is marked by unequal power relations between a hegemonic discourse and an emerging counterdiscourse.

Those who speak through ID shield themselves behind the putative neutrality of English as the planetary language. They believe that learning English is a way to gain access to global relationships, international commerce, tourism, technology, and science. For them, English as an international language is an innocent language. Teaching English is an act without political consequences, as English is viewed as "God-given, civilizing, noble, a vehicle of the entire development of human tradition, well adapted for change and development, not ethnic or ideological, the world's first truly global language, of universal interest" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 276). As a global language, English gives access to the available material and intangible goods.

Those who speak through ED question the putative neutrality of English. They ask themselves whom English, as an international language, can serve in the world. They face ethical dilemmas, as Judd (1983) points out:

Does the teaching of English serve to entrench the power of an elite, privileged group of people who may have little interest in the welfare of the majority of the people in the country? Do teachers of English participate in a process that "nurtures illusion"? (as cited by Peirce, 1989, p. 402)

In ED, the apparent neutrality of English is seen as a manifestation of the ideological process of conversion from the particular into the universal. For those who speak through ED, English as an international language is not an innocent language, and English is an essentially political act.

We believe these findings relate to Pêcheux's (1988) comments on how individuals relate to a dominant ideological discursive formation. Individuals can either be *good subjects* or *bad subjects*. The discourse of good subjects is characterized by the overlapping of the subject of enunciation and the subject of the dominant ideology (the universal subject) in the form of acquiescence. The discourse of bad subjects is characterized by the detachment between the subject of enunciation and the subject of the dominant ideology (the universal subject) in the form of insurrection (pp. 213–218).

In relation to ID and in Pêcheux's (1988) terms, almost all our

participants assume the form of good subjects. As subjects of enunciation, they reflect the universal subject of the dominant neoliberal ideology and discourse. A few assume their condition of bad subjects. As insurgent subjects, they counteridentify themselves with ID that is imposed by interdiscourse in the form of evidence of meaning. The insurgent subject, aware of the blindfold effects peculiar to the dominant ideology, produces a counterdiscourse.

The only two participants who talked about critical pedagogy as bad subjects were professors who were familiar with academic research literature and events. These results prompted some questions: Why is the process of identifying with ID still so prevalent among English teachers in elementary and secondary schools, private language institutes, and even universities? Why do only a few English teachers distance themselves from ID?

In support of the supremacy of ID, an entire industry of material and intangible resources sponsored by pounds and dollars controls ELT in the world. Regarding ELT, Brazil (certainly along with other developing countries) has been dependent on the United States and England. According to Phillipson (1992), "publicity from organizations involved in the teaching of English or of applied linguistics necessarily specifies what physical and intellectual resources they have available. Because of the purpose of such documentation, it declares, faithfully one presumes, what English has" (p. 277). This argument was present in the discourse of three of the professors we interviewed. They pointed out the historical submission to imported British and U.S. textbooks and methodologies. One even narrated in detail how she was captured by the British and U.S. cultures, first as a learner and later as a teacher, through textbooks. As a result, when she first traveled to England, she realized that everything was familiar to her.

Usually, one adopts imported books from England or the United States, which, in turn, are informed by U.S. and British cultures. It is as if they were selling their culture, it is as if for one to know a language, you should know the culture so that you can communicate appropriately. I agree because when I was there I didn't have a problem, by knowing the culture I was able to act properly, I was not an outsider, I learned everything in textbooks. When I visited the United States and England, I felt I was home. (P35, I2, May 9, p. 80)

Interestingly, she reported an incident that occurred while she was attending a course in England with teachers from Italy, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil. According to her, on the last day of class the teachers were supposed to discuss the role of culture in ELT. However, the subject matter was rejected by the Italian teachers, who ostensibly



accused the South American teachers of being submissive, alienated, and passive consumers of British culture:

It was obvious that the Italians were very upset with the South Americans. They said that we accepted everything without questioning, it was as if we were like little clowns clapping at everything done by British people. The teacher was shocked by the Italians' attitude and sided with us. (P35, I2, May 9, p. 80)

The anecdote suggests center-periphery relations. Whereas the South Americans seemed to be more submissive to the center, the Italians seemed to be more critical by distancing themselves from the center.

## TAKING INVENTORY: WHAT DO BRAZILIAN TEACHERS OF ENGLISH KNOW OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY?

We can now answer our research question briefly: Brazilian teachers of English are unaware of critical pedagogy. We believe that in Brazil critical pedagogy is still a matter of interest only to a few academics, including ourselves. Ironically, in the land of Freire, the voice of critical pedagogy is heard in the field of ELT only as a foreign voice that radiates from the center to the periphery. The professors concerned with critical pedagogy are generally ex-teachers of English who have abandoned teaching English in order to talk about the teaching of English. Repeating the same mistake, falling back into the mainstream Western practice, they have set themselves up as the center of critical pedagogy to enlighten those who still faithfully bear the shield of communicative language teaching and are at the periphery of the debate over critical pedagogy.

This study revealed that critical pedagogy has not resounded among those who actually teach English, not even among our colleagues at the Federal University of Mato Grosso. Considering that our university is the only one in the state of Mato Grosso that graduates English teachers (most of the participants in our study were once our students), we as teacher educators need to intensify the debate in our own workplace so that we can displace and dismantle the supremacy of ID. We need to do critical pedagogy and stop talking about it. After all, as teacher educators, we believe in the multiplying effect of our practices. Our actions should embrace the principles we expect our student teachers to use in their work. Either we, Brazilian professors, incarnate critical pedagogy as an effective practice that deeply transforms our way of viewing the world, the way we perceive ourselves, our role as English teachers, and our role in society, ethically leading us in the direction of those excluded from

full participation in society, or critical pedagogy is doomed to be just another fad in the ELT market.

To do critical pedagogy in the ELT field means that the act of teaching English is an essentially political act. We need to uncover the myth of the neutrality of English as an international language. This myth denies the political nature of ELT and takes for granted that ELT is merely a practice for global communication, hiding power relations that guarantee the hegemony of English in the concert of languages in the capitalist world.

Freire (1982, 1984) spoke relentlessly about the empowering effects of literacy on people who are outside the world of writing. Obviously, he understood literacy as the reading-writing of the authentic word and world and not as a mere parroting of words dictated by the elite. Just as literacy can empower those who are illiterate, learning English can empower those who are excluded from the English-speaking world. To achieve this empowerment, we as Brazilian teacher educators, together with our student teachers, need to deconstruct the ready-made packets of principles, methods, techniques, and materials in ELT that are imposed by the center and passively consumed by the periphery. We need to stop emphasizing only linguistic and technical competence. We spend most of our classroom time trying to make students repeat another's words fluently, trying to erase the traces of their identities shown in their accents. If we want to change the route of ELT in Brazil and form empowered teachers, responsible for their practice and able to construct their own methodologies and materials, we need to question the supremacy of linguistic and technical competence to the detriment of political competence. We need to question the principles, the methods, and the curriculum that have dominated undergraduate courses for English teachers, and we need to do so with them while we are teaching them.

In light of our findings, we wonder what will happen to the NCP, which was hatched by intellectuals. How will elementary and secondary teachers implement it? How can teachers empower learners to write and speak back to the dominant ideology if they are still under the spell of ID? The unfolding of this story is somewhat predictable. The history of education in Brazil contains many examples of progressive reforms that failed because they were imposed authoritatively without consideration of the teachers' profile. We wonder whom the NCP will serve. After all, the wise word of the experts on the NCP is already being sold in short training courses. Will the NCP serve to empower minority students, as it was intended to do? Will it serve to empower the periphery to talk back to the center?

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## APPENDIX

### Instruments

#### Interview 1

1. Que tipo de abordagem de ensino você usa para ensinar inglês? [What kind of approach do you use for English language teaching?]
2. Você já ouviu falar de pedagogia crítica? Como você a vê? [Have you heard of critical pedagogy in ELT? How do you see it?]
3. Politicamente, como você se vê enquanto professor de inglês? Como acha que os outros vêem você? [Politically, how do you see yourself as an English teacher? How do you think others see you?]

#### Interview 2

Read the passages below and comment upon them.

##### Passage 1

The model for L2 learning proposed by Gardner and Lambert (*apud* Baker, 1993) identifies two kinds of learners:

“Group 1: A wish to identify with or join another language group

Learners sometimes want to affiliate with a different language community. Such learners

wish to join in with the minority or majority language's cultural activities, find their roots or form friendships. This is termed integrative motivation.

Group 2: Learning a language for useful purposes

The second reason is utilitarian in nature. Learners may acquire a second language to find a job, further career prospects, pass exams . . . . This is termed instrumental motivation." (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, as cited in Baker, 1993, p. 90)

Passage 2

"In broad terms, then, one might say that a critical pedagogy of English in the world is an attempt to enable students to write (speak, read, listen) back. The notion of voice, therefore, is not one that implies any language use, the empty babble of communicative language class, but rather must be tied to a vision of the creation and transformation of possibilities (cf. Simon, 1987). The voices that we are seeking to help students to find and to create are *insurgent* voices, that speak in opposition to the local and global discourses that limit and produce the possibilities that frame our students' lives." (Pennycook, 1994, p. 311)

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# Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis

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My primary purpose in this article is to conceptualize a framework for conducting critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA). I begin with a critique of the scope and method of current models of classroom interaction analysis and classroom discourse analysis, arguing that they offer only a limited and limiting perspective on classroom discourse. I then contend that the concepts of discourse enunciated in Foucauldian poststructuralism and Saidian postcolonialism can be employed to develop a critical framework for understanding what actually transpires in the L2 classroom. Drawing insights from these two discourse traditions, I attempt to construct a conceptual framework for CCDA and present basic principles and procedures that might make CCDA possible. I conclude the article with suggestions for further exploration that CCDA might open up.

A few years ago, I was teaching in the MATESOL program of a university in the southeastern part of the United States. In addition to courses in TESOL, the program at that time was offering classes for advanced international students aimed at improving their reading and writing skills. It was part of my administrative responsibility, as director of the program, to periodically review the teaching effectiveness of the instructors teaching those classes. One day, at about the midpoint in a semester, I observed a class taught by Debbie (a pseudonym). The class consisted of 20 students mostly from the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Debbie had put together a course pack of readings under the theme "American Heroes." It consisted of selected texts about outstanding U.S. politicians, scientists, artists, and the like. The readings, I thought, were well chosen and well organized. On the day of my observation, Debbie chose to use a text called "Mission to the Moon." She started with prereading questions that elicited no more than monosyllabic responses from her students. She explained the heroic contribution made by the Apollo 11 astronauts to advance the frontiers of knowledge. She then asked several comprehension questions, to which her students, again reluctantly, answered in monosyllables. She continued in the same vein and ended the class after giving a writing assignment. As prearranged,

she left the classroom to enable me to talk to the students to get their perspective of classroom events.

As I was observing that class, it was fairly apparent to me that (a) this was a teacher-fronted class, (b) the students had not read the text, and (c) they were not able to participate in class discussions in spite of their advanced level of proficiency in English. Given what I thought was a dismal lack of preparation and participation on the part of the students, I was wondering what Debbie could have done differently to make the class more productive. It was therefore with sympathy and support for her that I started talking to the students. I had barely finished introducing myself when several of them vociferously started complaining about Debbie. It was as if their silence in class was just a matter of the proverbial calm before the storm. They said that she was not at all helping them improve their reading and writing skills. "She is all the time talking about American culture and American heroes and nothing else," they complained bitterly. It soon became clear to me that the tension arose not because of the content of the text but partly because of Debbie's method of teaching and partly because of the students' perception of her ethnocentricity. They felt that their identities were not being recognized and that their voices were not being respected. Their unwillingness to prepare for the class and to participate in class discussions appeared to me to be a form of passive resistance.

It is reasonable to assume that this episode or a variation of it may be playing out in many ESL classrooms. It emphasizes how "classrooms are decontextualised from the learners' point of view when the learners' feelings, their beliefs about what is important, their reasoning and their experience are not part of the assumed context of the teacher's communication" (Young, 1992, p. 59). It reminds us as TESOL professionals that classroom is the crucible where the prime elements of education—ideas and ideologies, policies and plans, materials and methods, teachers and the taught—all mix together to produce exclusive and at times explosive environments that might help or hinder the creation and utilization of learning opportunities. What actually happens there largely determines the degree to which desired learning outcomes are realized. The task of systematically observing, analyzing, and understanding classroom aims and events therefore becomes central to any serious educational enterprise.

The importance of such a task has long been recognized in general education as well as in L2 education. In this article, limiting my focus to L2 education, I examine two widely used approaches to classroom observation, generally characterized as the *interaction approach* and the *discourse approach*, and then argue that there is an imperative need to develop a third: a *critical approach*. I also touch upon appropriate analytical tools that might be fruitfully employed in critical classroom

discourse analysis (CCDA) and suggest new directions for further exploration that the approach might open up. To achieve my goals, I derive insights from the concepts of discourse associated with two major schools of thought in cultural studies: Foucauldian poststructuralism and Saidian postcolonialism. For reasons of brevity and clarity, I formulate my discussion under the rubric of classroom interaction analysis, classroom discourse analysis, critical perspectives on discourse, and CCDA.

## CLASSROOM INTERACTION ANALYSIS

Classroom interaction analysis involves the use of an observation scheme consisting of a finite set of preselected and predetermined categories for describing certain verbal behaviors of teachers and students as they interact in the classroom. Although seldom explicitly articulated, the theoretical foundation governing classroom interaction analysis can be traced to behavioristic psychology, which emphasizes the objective analysis of observable behavior. Accordingly, the categories included in an observation scheme reflect the designer's assumptions about what observable teacher behavior is necessary in order to build a classroom behavior profile of the teacher. These principles are clearly reflected in the oldest and the best known scheme in the field of general education: the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories, proposed by Flanders in 1970. The Flanders model spawned a series of category schemes in L2 education. According to one count (Chaudron, 1988, p. 18), nearly 25 observation schemes with wide variations in categories, procedures, and descriptions appeared during the late 1970s and early 1980s. These schemes by and large followed the Flanders model of observing, describing, and assigning numerical values to teacher talk and student talk using preselected and predetermined categories and coding procedures.

The use of interaction schemes undoubtedly resulted in a much better understanding of classroom aims and events, particularly in terms of teacher talk and student talk. Nevertheless, interaction schemes all share four crucial limitations: (a) They focus exclusively on the product of verbal behaviors of teachers and learners and give little or no consideration to classroom processes or to learning outcomes; (b) they depend on quantitative measurements, thereby losing the essence of communicative intent that cannot be reduced to numerical codification; (c) they are unidirectional, that is, the information flow is generally from the observer to the teacher, the observer being a supervisor in the case of practicing teachers or a teacher educator in the case of teacher trainees; and (d) they are unidimensional, that is, the basis of observation is largely confined to one single perspective, that of the observer, thus



emphasizing the observer's perception of observable teacher behavior. (For detailed critiques, see Allwright, 1988; Chaudron, 1988; Long, 1980; van Lier, 1988.)

An important development in classroom interaction analysis occurred when Allen, Fröhlich, and Spada (1984) proposed what they called the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) observation scheme. The primary objectives of the scheme are to capture differences in the communicative orientation of classroom instruction (i.e., form-focused vs. meaning-focused) and to examine their effects on learning outcomes. Designed in two parts, the scheme contains 73 categories representing binary distinctions (e.g., student-centered vs. teacher-centered participation, reaction to form vs. message, and genuine vs. pseudo requests). It is different from most other interaction schemes in two significant ways: It is directly linked to communicative methods of language teaching, and it is designed for real-time coding as well as for analysis of recordings of classes.

A decade after the COLT observation scheme was proposed, a user-friendly manual of coding conventions was published (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995). The final chapter of the manual contains a compilation of 11 studies in which different researchers used COLT in different classroom settings. These studies show that a significant achievement of COLT, compared with its predecessors, has been its capacity to help its users differentiate between more and less communicatively oriented instruction, thus enabling them to better connect instructional input with potential learning outcomes. However, COLT shares some of the limitations that characterized other interaction schemes, a point reiterated by the authors of the studies included in the manual. For instance, Allen (in Allen, Fröhlich, & Spada, 1984) finds it necessary to recommend that "the quantitative procedures based on COLT be supplemented by a more detailed qualitative analysis, with a view to obtaining additional information about the way meaning is co-constructed in the classroom" (p. 143). Spada and Fröhlich (1995) also say that "if one is interested in undertaking a detailed discourse analysis of the conversational interactions between teachers and students, another method of coding and analyzing classroom data would be more appropriate" (p. 10). Thus, COLT remains basically Flandersian in the sense that the basis of observation is largely confined to observable, codifiable, and countable behavior of learners and teachers.

As the above discussion shows, the interaction approach to classroom observation can produce only a fragmented picture of classroom reality. The inherent drawbacks of such an approach inevitably led to the emergence of alternative analytical schemes that can be grouped under the rubric of classroom discourse analysis.

## CLASSROOM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

One of the earliest L2 classroom observation studies that embraced a discourse analytical approach is Allwright's (1980) study on patterns of participation. Mehan's (1979) ethnomethodological work in general education convinced Allwright (1988) that "whatever happened in the classroom was indeed a co-production, and therefore that it no longer made sense to look at classroom interaction as if it was only the teacher's behaviour that mattered" (p. 171). He was thus motivated by the desire to make sense of classroom discourse in general rather than to narrowly study teacher effectiveness. Accordingly, he posited a three-way analysis in his observational scheme: (a) a turn-taking analysis, which relates to several aspects of turn-getting and turn-giving practices; (b) a topic analysis, which relates to the use of language as instances of linguistic samples mostly meant for student imitation and of communicative expressions about the target language itself; and (c) a task analysis, which relates to the managerial as well as the cognitive aspects of classroom tasks.

The significance of Allwright's (1980) observational scheme lies in the fact that it departed from the earlier Flandersian tradition in three important ways: (a) It made no a priori distinction between teachers' and learners' roles but instead allowed patterns of participation to emerge from the data (cf. Fanselow, 1977), (b) it consisted of high-inference categories that are subject to interpretational variations, and (c) it treated classroom participants as individuals rather than as a collective mass by attempting to describe and account for their individual behavior. And, although it involved some numerical measurements, the framework was essentially ethnographic, entailing qualitative interpretations of data.

Allwright's (1980) emphasis on ethnography finds a strong echo in the work of van Lier (1988), who very effectively uses ethnographic means to understand classroom aims and events. Highlighting the need to contextualize the actions and contributions of participants in the classroom, van Lier "takes the educational environment (with the classroom at its centre) as the crucial data resource and thus strongly emphasizes the social context in which language development takes place" (p. 24). Accordingly, in studying turn taking, for instance, he looks not only at the distribution of turns but also at the available options for turn taking and the extent to which different participants took these up. He also offers a useful classification of activity types and how they might influence patterns of participation.

The interpretive nature of classroom discourse analysis advocated by Allwright (1980) and van Lier (1988) also entails an analysis of multiple

perspectives—the teacher’s, the learner’s, and the observer’s (researcher’s)—on classroom discourse. In studies that ethnographically analyzed transcripts of video recordings of classroom performance along with pre- and postobservation interviews with participants (Kumaravadivelu, 1991, 1993, in press), I have attempted to show the usefulness of classroom discourse analysis that takes multiple perspectives into serious consideration. In the 1991 study, I argue that, to be relevant, any classroom discourse analysis must be based on an analysis of the potential mismatch between intention and interpretation—between the teacher’s intention and the learner’s interpretation, on the one hand, and between the teacher’s and learner’s intention and the observer’s interpretation, on the other. Accordingly, I have identified 10 potential sources of mismatch between intention and interpretation. In the 1993 study, I demonstrate how classroom discourse analysis can facilitate an understanding of the degree to which classroom participants are able or unable to create and utilize learning opportunities in class. Finally, in my forthcoming study, I provide guidelines for helping practicing teachers explore their own classrooms so that they can self-observe, self-analyze, and self-evaluate learning and teaching acts and thus, ultimately, develop the capacity to theorize from practice and practice what they theorize.

## The Context of Discourse and the Discourse of Context

A common thread that runs through the discourse analytical studies discussed above is the way they treated the concepts of *discourse* and *context*—both borrowed from the field of mainstream discourse analysis. Standard textbooks on discourse and discourse analysis, particularly those meant for language teachers (e.g., Cook, 1989; McCarthy, 1991; McCarthy & Carter, 1994), use the term *discourse* to refer to connected texts as opposed to isolated sentences. Discourse analysis thus becomes a study of larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. To the extent it relates to language as communication, it relates to the relationship between language structure and the immediate social context in which it is used. Thus, to use a distinction made by Widdowson (1979), discourse analysts are mainly concerned with *textual cohesion*, which operates in the surface-level lexis and grammar, and *discourse coherence*, which operates between underlying speech acts.

The emphasis on social context has helped classroom discourse analysts look at the classroom event as a social event and the classroom as a minisociety with its own rules and regulations, routines, and rituals. Their focus is the experience of teachers and learners within this minisociety. Such experience, as Breen (1985) writes, “is two-dimensional: individual-subjective experience and collective-intersubjective experi-

ence. The subjective experience of teacher and learners in a classroom is woven with personal purposes, attitudes, and preferred ways of doing things. The intersubjective experience derives from and maintains teacher- and learner-shared definitions, conventions, and procedure which enable a working together in a crowd" (p. 140). Classroom discourse that embodies such a two-dimensional experience "is a central part of this social context, in other words the verbal interaction shapes the context and is shaped by it" (van Lier, 1988, p. 47). Such a view of social context allowed classroom discourse analysts to study the routines of turn taking, turn sequencing, activity types, and elicitation techniques. Thus, the interpretation of any category involving "repeats," "elicits," "responses," and so on was seen to rely on "the contingent relationships between the current and the preceding or upcoming discourse" (Chaudron, 1988, p. 39).

## PERSPECTIVES ON DISCOURSE

The concept of discourse and the practice of discourse analysis as delineated by classroom discourse analysts marked a notable departure from the behavioristic approach associated with the earlier interaction approach. Thus, within the confines of their stated research agenda, classroom discourse analysts were able to achieve what they set out to achieve, that is, the explication of contingent relationships reflected in the textual cohesion and discourse coherence created by discourse participants during the course of their classroom interaction. But, as I show below, their discourse perspective is far more limited and limiting than other discourse perspectives, particularly those associated with contemporary cultural studies: Foucauldian poststructuralism and Saidian postcolonialism. I therefore take a detour to peep into these discourse traditions before returning to my critique of classroom discourse analysis. For the sake of continuity and coherence, I discuss the two critical traditions first and then highlight their educational applications.

### Discourse and Poststructuralism

For Foucault (1972), the French thinker, discourse is not merely the suprasentential aspect of language; rather, language itself is one aspect of discourse. In accordance with that view, he offers a three-dimensional definition of discourse, "treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (p. 80). The first definition relates to all actual utterances or

texts. The second relates to specific formations or fields, as in *the discourse of racism* or *the discourse of feminism*. The third relates to sociopolitical structures that create the conditions governing particular utterances or texts. Discourse thus designates the entire conceptual territory on which knowledge is produced and reproduced. It includes not only what is actually thought and articulated but also determines what can be said or heard and what silenced, what is acceptable and what tabooed. Discourse in this sense is a whole field or domain within which language is used in particular ways. This field or domain is produced in and through social practices, institutions, and actions.

In characterizing language as one, and only one, of the multitude of organisms that constitute discourse, Foucault (e.g., 1970) significantly extends the notion of *linguistic text*. A text means what it means not because of any inherent objective linguistic features but because it is generated by discursive formations, each with its particular ideologies and particular ways of controlling power. No text is innocent, and every text reflects a fragment of the world. In other words, texts are political because all discursive formations are political. Analyzing text or discourse therefore means analyzing discursive formations that are essentially political in character and ideological in content.

Foucault (1970, 1972) further argues that every individual and every utterance is embedded in and controlled by *discursive fields* of power/knowledge. Power manifests not in a top-down flow from the upper to the lower strata of social hierarchy but extends itself in capillary fashion, becoming a part of daily action, speech, and life. Power/knowledge is expressed in terms of *regimes of truth*, which are sets of rules, statements, and understandings that define what is true or real at any given time. Thus, as Mills (1997) succinctly points out, “power, knowledge and truth—this configuration is essentially what constitutes discourse” (p. 17). This configuration is made up of what Foucault (1970, 1972) calls *discursive practices*, which are used in certain typical patterns to form *discursive formations*. Discursive formations make it difficult for individuals to think outside of them; hence they are also exercises in power and control. A discursive change, whether social, political, or cultural, can therefore be effected only when an entire community, not just an individual, changes its ways of thinking and knowing, speaking and doing.

Although Foucault does entertain the possibility of systemic social or discursive change through subversion and resistance in his later works (e.g., *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, 1984), much of his analysis tends to focus mainly on the workings of power. A somewhat different focus on the relationship between dominance and resistance comes from another French sociologist, de Certeau (1984), who draws attention to the subversions embedded in the practices of everyday life.

For him, the powerful institutions of society are able to demand particular behaviors, thoughts, and responses from individuals. He discusses the coercive power of these institutions as a *calculus of force-relationships* or a *strategy*. Individuals, he argues, do not always comply with the dictates of dominant institutions. Instead, for a variety of reasons, ranging from incompetence to unwillingness to outright resistance, they reject the demands placed on them institutionally and operate according to their own desires, in a way that presents itself to them as personally empowering. This oppositional response he calls a *tactic* (pp. xviii–xx). A tactic

is an art of the weak. . . . clever tricks of the “weak” within the order established by the “strong,” an art of putting one over on the adversary on his own turf. . . . The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. (pp. 31–40)

The weak know intuitively how to manipulate the strong, so much so that under certain adverse circumstances the tactics of the weak can take the form of systematic and sustained subversion. Tactics, de Certeau explains, can be as common as stealing stationery from one’s workplace, refusing to cooperate with authority, or spreading disinformation. They “characterize the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations” (p. 18).

Because subtle, stubborn forms of subversion are part and parcel of the practice of everyday life, de Certeau (1984) emphasizes the importance of investigating them along with subtle forms of dominance. And one site of such investigation is the linguistic text. Like Foucault’s (1972) discourse, de Certeau’s text extends beyond language. “Today, the text is society itself. It takes urbanistic, industrial, commercial, or televised forms” that produce a system “that distinguishes and privileges authors, educators, revolutionaries, in a word, ‘producers’ in contrast with those who do not produce” (pp. 166–167). But, unlike Foucault, who conceived discourse largely as power/knowledge, de Certeau, as Threadgold (1997) points out, “made clear the need to think about both the way disciplinary knowledges work to conceal the positions and interests of those who enunciate them and the way conceiving knowledge as discourse excludes an account of the power of enunciation to subvert or change it” (p. 71).

A similar view about discourse as power/knowledge has been expressed by yet another French theorist, Bourdieu (1990). He argues that individuals strive to respond to dominance and resistance by seeking to maximize their *capital*. Capital, for him, is a form of power. Contrary to

common belief, capital is not only economic but is also social and cultural. A fourth kind of capital, symbolic capital, constrains the realization of the other three. These four fields of capital interact and interweave in myriad ways involving both communities and individuals. For instance, as Luke (1996) explains, economic capital in the form of material goods and resources can be transformed into cultural capital in the form of academic knowledge or cultural thought, and into social capital in the form of access to organizational facilities or political parties (pp. 326–330).

The three fields of capital—economic, social, and cultural—are recognized as capital if and only if they are granted legitimacy, that is, symbolic capital, by the society at large. In other words, realization of one's economic, cultural, and social capital is contingent upon societal, institutional authorization and approval. As Bourdieu (1990) puts it, "The kinds of capital, like trumps in a game of cards, are powers that define the chances of profit in a given field." That is to say, the position of a particular individual in the society is "defined by the position (s)he occupies in the different fields, that is, in the distribution of the powers that are active in each of them" (p. 230). Society itself is structured by the differential distribution of capital. Such structuring is done by the state as well as by established social structures, including educational institutions that regulate the availability, value, and use of capital and its conversion across fields. These forces are constantly engaged in capital formation and distribution, thereby helping produce and reproduce hierarchies of knowledge that legitimize inequalities between social groups. Bourdieu, Passeron, and Martin (1994) call such legitimization *la violence symbolique* (symbolic violence).

Symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu (1991), manifests itself in discourse, particularly in academic discourse. He asserts that "there is a whole dimension of authorized language, its rhetoric, syntax, vocabulary, and even pronunciation which exists purely to underline the authority" of those who perpetuate symbolic violence (p. 76). He relates particular texts and events to larger macrosocial structures by specifically connecting the relations among various discourse formations with the relations among the social positions of their authors.

As the above discussion reveals, Foucauldian poststructuralist discourse and its variations display an acute preoccupation with notions of power/knowledge and of dominance and resistance. In spite of such a preoccupation, strangely enough, neither Foucault nor de Certeau and Bourdieu actually paid any attention to the European colonial expansion or to its effect on the power/knowledge systems of the modern European state (Bhatnagar, 1986; Spivak, 1988). Their theories are considered Eurocentric in their focus and of limited use in understanding colonial discourse. However, their construction of the discourse of

power/knowledge and of dominance/resistance is so influential that it provided a point of departure for postcolonial discourse analysis.

## Discourse and Postcolonialism

Cultural theorist Said's (1978) *Orientalism* was the first account to offer a comprehensive theoretical framework for postcolonial discourse analysis. In reading a number of literary, historical, sociological, and anthropological texts produced by the colonial West, Said found that the colonized people were dehumanized, stereotyped, and treated not as communities of individuals but as an indistinguishable mass about whom one could amass knowledge. The number of stereotypical observations made repeatedly about colonized countries and cultures is so great that these statements cannot be attributed simply to the individual authors' beliefs but can only be products of widespread belief systems structured by discursive frameworks and legitimized by the power relations found in colonialism.

Said (1978) used the term *Orientalism* to refer to the discursive field constituted by Western representations of the Other. Orientalism is a systematically constructed discourse by which the West "was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively" (p. 3). It forms an interrelated web of ideas, images, and texts from the scholarly to the popular that are produced by artists, writers, missionaries, travelers, politicians, militarists, and administrators and that shape and structure Western understanding and management of colonized cultures and peoples. Said showed that the discourse of Orientalism is built on a binary opposition between the West and the East, us and them, that produces an essentialized and static Other. He thus moved away from a narrow understanding of colonial authority to show how it functioned by producing a discourse or a structure of thinking about the Other. He explained that ideas, images, or texts that are accorded the authority of academics, institutions, and government create not only interested knowledge but also the very reality they seek to describe. Said's analysis of Orientalism is founded on Foucault's (1972) notion that knowledge and power are inseparably tied together, that is, that knowledge is constructed according to a discursive field that creates a representation of the object of knowledge, its constitution, and its limits.

Although Said's (1978) seminal thoughts on Orientalism inform much of contemporary literary and cultural studies, he has been criticized for adopting a Foucauldian model that not only focuses on the working of power but tends to grant almost total hegemony to dominant systems of representation. As many scholars (e.g., Ahmed, 1992;



Breckenridge & van der Veer, 1993; Loomba, 1998) have pointed out, Said's view of the colonizer and the colonized as locked in a rigid dichotomy of domination and subordination does not account for the diversity of historical contexts, for the heterogeneity of colonized subjectivity, or for the agency of colonized peoples. It is generally true that colonized people gradually internalize the violently disseminated idea of the superiority of the colonizing culture and therefore seek to imitate the norms of the colonizer. But is this colonial mimicry merely a pure act of subordination?

Raising and responding to that question, and taking a psychoanalytic approach to colonialism, Bhabha (1984, 1985) suggests that colonial mimicry, instead of always being an expression of subjugation (which it frequently is), may at times actually operate as a mode of subversion. Bhabha points out a fundamental contradiction inscribed in colonial ideology: On the one hand, it seeks to assert the unbridgeable gap between the superior West and the inferior East while, on the other hand, continuously attempting to bridge the gap (through religious conversion or secular education) by remaking the Other in the image of the Self. Bhabha also sees this contradiction, Mills (1997) observes, "as a form of complex desire on the part of the colonizer, rather than simply as an act of oppression and appropriation. The colonizer here is just as much at the mercy of these forms of representation as the colonized, and is simply caught in the play of desire and fantasy which the colonial context produces" (p. 125).

The play of desire and fantasy, according to Bhabha (1985), renders colonial discourse "hybrid" or "ambivalent." Hybridity "is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination" (p. 154). Colonial authority is never able to produce a perfect copy of the original but can produce only something that is transmuted. Consequently, the notion of hybridity opens up spaces for the colonized to subvert the master-discourse, thereby unsettling the traditional representation of colonial power as unlimited and nonnegotiable. Hybridity makes it possible for colonized peoples to challenge the colonizers in their own language. Thus, English education in Africa and Asia became a double-edged sword because the colonized did not simply accept the superiority of English institutions but also used English education to undermine that superiority, foster nationalism, and demand equality and freedom (Loomba, 1998, pp. 89–90).

Bhabha's (1984, 1985) representations of resistance contrast with the views of another postcolonial critic, Spivak, who is wary of too easy a recovery of the voice or agency of colonized people. In an extremely influential essay titled "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1985a), Spivak argues that *epistemic violence* of colonialism was so pervasive and so

devastating that it rewrote all intellectual, cultural, and legal systems, making it impossible to discover the authentic subaltern consciousness. She correctly points out that even the voices of resistance that Bhabha and others refer to are the voices mostly of the Western-educated, indigenous elite and not of those on the margins of colonial circuitry: men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban population, and the like.

Articulating the relationship between poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and feminism and pointing to the wide acceptance of such totalizing, monolithic constructs such as *Third World* or *Third-World woman*, Spivak (1988) suggests that the colonial construction of knowledge has become the only reality that now constitutes both the colonizer and the colonized and the only currency that is usable both in the West and in the East. From this view, even nationalism is a derivative discourse that, despite its reversal of colonial terms, remains trapped within those very terms and hence has only succeeded in replacing colonialism with neocolonialism. Claiming that the same colonial construction of knowledge informs feminism, Spivak (1985b) challenges “the colour-blindness” of Euro-American feminist theories and movements, asserting that “it is particularly unfortunate” that Western feminism “reproduces the axioms of imperialism” (p. 243) by romanticizing the emergence of the articulate Western female subject and her individuality without marking how the expansion of imperialism makes such a feminist project possible. In highlighting the problematic aspect of Western feminism, Spivak echoes the arguments of yet another postcolonial critic, Mohanty (1984), who demonstrates the ways in which Western feminist scholarship constitutes women of the Third World as a homogeneous group, which it then uses as a category of analysis on the basis of certain sociological and anthropological universals without considering larger social, political, and economic power structures that operate between the West and the non-West.

Although Spivak (1985a) sympathizes with attempts to recover the subaltern voice, she sees difficulties and contradictions in constructing a speaking position for the subaltern. By accentuating the limitations of subaltern representation, however, she does not call upon postcolonial intellectuals to abstain from representation altogether. Rather, she urges them to vigilantly unlearn their privilege and ethically mark their own theoretical positions in order to avoid imperialistic gestures that seek to represent those who cannot represent themselves or to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. Her focus on the possibility of alternative voices being recoverable within discourses has been instrumental in forcing many postcolonial critics to rethink their own relation to colonial texts (Mills, 1997, p. 120).

## Educational Applications of Poststructuralism

The Foucauldian concept of discourse has enormously influenced thought and action in several academic circles, three of which bear direct relevance to applied linguistics and TESOL: critical linguistics, critical pedagogy, and feminist pedagogy.

Adhering to the Foucauldian tenet that no discourse is innocent, critical linguists (also called *critical discourse analysts*) argue that “all representation is mediated, moulded by the value-systems that are ingrained in the medium (language in this case) used for representation; it challenges common sense by pointing out that something could have been represented in some other way, with a very different significance” (Fowler, 1996, p. 4). Saying that the ideology and power that constitute dominant discourses are hidden from ordinary people, critical linguists seek to make these discourses visible by engaging in a type of critical discourse analysis that “is more issue-oriented than theory-oriented” (van Dijk, 1997, p. 22). In that sense, they seek to actualize Foucault’s thoughts through a close linguistic analysis of texts within a particular sociopolitical context. By doing so, they hope to shed light on the way power relations work within the society. They thus move from the local to the global, displaying “how discourse cumulatively contributes to the reproduction of macro structures” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 42).

As can be expected, critical linguists pointedly emphasize the role of critical language awareness in developing sociopolitical consciousness. Fairclough (1995), in particular, believes that critical language awareness “can lead to reflexive analysis of practices of domination implicit in the transmission and learning of academic discourse, and the engagement of learners in the struggle to contest and change such practices” (p. 222). He further points out that language learners can learn to contest practices of domination only if the relationship between language and power is made explicit to them—a position shared by critical pedagogists as well.

Combining Foucault’s sociological theories and Brazilian educator Paulo Freire’s educational philosophy, critical pedagogists work under the assumption that academic institutions are not simply instructional sites; they are, in fact, “cultural arenas where heterogeneous ideological, discursive, and social forms collide in an unremitting struggle for dominance” (McLaren, 1995, p. 30). Classroom reality is socially constructed, politically motivated, and historically determined. Therefore, critical pedagogy has to empower classroom participants “to critically appropriate forms of knowledge outside of their immediate experience, to envisage versions of a world which is ‘not yet’ in order to alter the grounds on which life is lived” (Simon, 1988, p. 2). Such a pedagogy would take seriously the sociopolitical, historical conditions that create

the cultural forms and interested knowledge that give meaning to the lives of teachers and learners. "In one sense, this points to the need to develop theories, forms of knowledge, and social practices that *work with* the experiences that people bring to the pedagogical setting" (Giroux, 1988, p. 134).

Asserting along Foucauldian lines that discourse empowers and disempowers, privileges and marginalizes, critical pedagogists call for an "empowering education" that relates "personal growth to public life by developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change" (Shor, 1992, p. 15) and helps students explore the subject matter in its sociopolitical, historical contexts with critical themes integrated into student language and experience. They consider contemporary language education "as somewhat bizarre in that it legitimates and limits language issues as technical and developmental" and believe that language education must be "viewed as a form of learning that not only instructs students into ways of 'naming' the world but also introduces them to particular social relations" (Giroux & Simon, 1988, p. 131). Similar thoughts are beginning to inform the debate about power and inequality in ESL education as well (see Tollefson, 1995).

Arguing that reading the world is not confined to reading race and class but involves reading gender as well, feminist pedagogists such as Lather (1991), Luke (1992), and Ellsworth (1992) attempt to "deconstruct the master narratives of patriarchy and thereby move gender onto the critical agenda even if, in many discourses, it remains institutionally contained at the margins" (Luke, 1992, p. 45). They agree with critical pedagogists that the classroom is one of the powerful ideological sites within which counterhegemonic discourses and practices can be organized. They contend, however, that discourse analysis should be concerned with the deconstruction of the political, social, psychological, and historical formations of gendered discourse because all discourse production is gendered. An appropriately gendered classroom must go beyond employing surface-level pedagogic strategies, such as giving female students equal opportunity to speak in the classroom or giving females equal representation in imagery and language in curricular text. Considering these strategies as a mere add-on tactic of incorporation, they seek critical classroom discourse that legitimizes female voices as well.

## Educational Applications of Postcolonialism

Postcolonial theorists offer a refreshingly challenging perspective on education in general and on English language education in particular.

They tell us that education was “a massive canon in the artillery of empire,” effecting, in Gramsci’s (1971) phrase, “a domination by consent” (p. 28). They also tell us that language

is a fundamental site of struggle for post-colonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in language. The control over language by the imperial centre—whether achieved by displacing native languages, by installing itself as a “standard” against other variants which are constituted as “impurities,” or by planting the language of empire in a new place—remains the most potent instrument of cultural control. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995, p. 283)

Perhaps no language is as much implicated in colonialism as English is. Several postcolonial commentators have pointed out that the same ideological climate informed both the growth of English and the growth of Empire. In her pioneering study *Masks of Conquest*, Viswanathan (1989) argues that in colonial India, the English literary text functioned as a mask that camouflaged the conquering activities of the colonizing authority. She wonders at the historical “irony that English literature appeared as a subject in the curriculum of the colonies long before it was institutionalized in the home country” (p. 3) of England. Noting that “the superiority of English rested on a racialized and gendered equation between language and nation” (p. 20), Krishnaswamy’s (1998) *Effeminism: The Economy of Colonial Desire* shows how colonialists relied “heavily upon a vocabulary of effeminacy to describe and codify Eastern languages and literatures while defining European languages and literatures, especially English, as hard, energetic, rational, and masculine” (p. 20).

Connecting this line of thinking specifically to English language teaching (ELT), Pennycook (1998), in *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*, offers an in-depth analysis of what he calls “the continuity of cultural constructs of colonialism” (p. 19) and demonstrates how ELT is deeply interwoven with the discourses of colonialism. ELT, he argues,

is a product of colonialism not just because it is colonialism that produced the initial conditions for the global spread of English but because it was colonialism that produced many of the ways of thinking and behaving that are still part of Western cultures. European/Western culture not only produced colonialism but was also produced by it; ELT not only rode on the back of colonialism to the distant corners of the Empire but was also in turn produced by that voyage. (p. 19)

Based on his analysis, Pennycook calls for concerted efforts to decolonize English language education by finding alternative representations and alternative possibilities in English classes.

## CLASSROOM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS REVISITED

If, simplifying the poststructural and postcolonial perspectives presented above, discourse can be seen as a three-dimensional construct consisting of a (socio)linguistic dimension, a sociocultural dimension, and a sociopolitical dimension, then classroom discourse analysts may be considered to be involved with the first, interested in the second, and indifferent to the third. By treating discourse as no more than a form of contextualized language use at the suprasentential level, classroom discourse analysts have treated it mostly as a (socio)linguistic phenomenon and have studied the grammatical and lexical elements of textual cohesion and discourse coherence that make contextualized language use possible. Although such a (socio)linguistic focus, as noted earlier, marks an advancement over the behavioristic approach associated with the classroom interaction approach, it nevertheless offers only a limited view of discourse. If one is serious about understanding what discourse is all about, it would be inadequate, as van Dijk (1997) has suggested,

to merely analyze its internal structures, the actions being accomplished, or the cognitive operations involved in language use. We need to account for the fact that discourse as social action is being engaged in within a framework of understanding, communication and interaction which is in turn part of broader sociocultural structures and processes. (p. 21)

Sociocultural aspects of classroom discourse are an area in which extensive research has been conducted. But its focus has been mostly confined to two strands of inquiry. The first focuses on cultural aspects of speech act performance. Typically, such studies (see Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993) seek to identify the basic linguistic structure of, say, politeness formulas in English as contrasted with politeness formulas in the learners' L1 or their interlanguage. The objectives of such studies are, of course, to predict areas of cultural adjustments for the L2 learner and to suggest strategies of pedagogic intervention for the L2 teacher. These studies have no doubt helped language professionals understand how pragmatic aspects of learners' interlanguage performance relate to the way certain speech acts are realized across languages and cultures. The second strand of inquiry focuses on ethnic variation in classroom interaction. Typically, such studies (e.g., Sato, 1981; Schinke-Llano, 1983) investigate the relationship between ethnicity and the distribution of turns, talk, and topic initiation in the L2 classroom. These studies have been found to be of limited value because of their preoccupation with ethnicity to the exclusion of other variables that may have contributed to interactional variations, variables such as the nature of the tasks given to learners, the teachers' pedagogic orientations, their personal attributes,

their teaching techniques, and their classroom management, not to mention all the affective factors that shape the interactive behavior of learners themselves (Kumaravadivelu, 1990; Malcolm, 1987).

Furthermore, a true and meaningful understanding of the sociocultural aspects of classroom discourse can be achieved not by realizing the surface-level features of communicative performance or conversational style but only by recognizing the complex and competing world of discourses that exist in the classroom. Recent studies on the role of culture in L2 learning and teaching (e.g., Kramsch, 1993) emphasize the need to go beyond an amorphous collection of facts and figures about cultures and cultural artifacts in order to understand how culturally shared meanings are co-constructed in the classroom. As Kramsch points out, the L2 classroom is a site of struggle where learners create their own personal meanings at the boundaries between the native speaker's meanings and their own everyday life: "From the clash between the familiar meanings of the native culture and the unexpected meanings of the target culture, meanings that were taken for granted are suddenly questioned, challenged, problematized" (p. 238). Understanding the learner's struggle to create meaning involves an understanding of how sociocultural meanings are linked in complicated ways to social identities—issues that have been neglected until recently (see the special-topic issue of *TESOL Quarterly* on language and identity, Vol. 31, No. 3, Autumn 1997).

Even a cursory glance at the professional literature in TESOL shows that classroom discourse analysts have shied away from any serious engagement with the ideological forces acting upon classroom discourse, even as they frequently emphasize the significant role these forces play in shaping and reshaping that discourse. Thus, for instance, in a widely acclaimed book, van Lier (1988) rightly argues that classroom research must "expose complex relationships between individual participants, the classroom, and the societal forces that influence it" (p. 82) but goes on to focus entirely on classroom-based issues such as initiative, topic and participation structure, and repair. More recently, van Lier (1996, 1997) has called for an ecological approach to classroom observation that embraces "not only the context of classroom learning but, more fundamentally, the very definitions of language, of development, and of mind" (1997, p. 783). Yet another example is McCarthy and Carter (1994), who, in a book that offers discourse perspectives for language teaching, tell their readers that a discourse-based view of language "involves considering the higher-order operations of language at the interface of cultural and ideological meanings and returning to the lower-order forms of language which are often crucial to the patterning of such meanings" (p. 38). Yet they refrain from telling their readers how to explore and exploit the higher order operations of language for

instructional and analytical purposes; instead, they merely recommend a list of books on critical linguistics for interested readers to pursue (p. 171).

The neglect of the broader sociocultural and sociopolitical dimensions of classroom discourse analysis has been made possible by its scope and method. Its scope has been confined mostly to treating the classroom as a self-contained minisociety insulated and isolated from the outside world rather than as an integral part of the larger society where the reproduction of many forms of domination and resistance based on such factors as class, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, language, and sexual orientation is almost a daily occurrence. Likewise, the preferred method of classroom discourse analysts—microethnography—has enabled them to study crucial classroom issues such as input and interaction, form and function, topics and tasks, questions and corrections, and the way they all relate to each other. Perhaps a combination of micro- and macroethnographic analyses, on the other hand, would have compelled them to cross the borders of the classroom to study broader social, cultural, political, and historical structures that have a bearing on classroom issues in order to see, as anthropologist Bateson (1979) would say, “the patterns that connect” (p. 16).

It is perhaps worth reiterating that classroom discourse analysts, as microethnographers focusing on micro issues of the classroom, did indeed advance the understanding of classroom aims and activities. My critique, then, is not about the gap between what was sought to be achieved and what was actually achieved but between what was actually achieved and what could have been achieved if only other perspectives of discourse (such as poststructural and postcolonial) had been taken into account. It is instructive in this context to note that although most classroom discourse analysts in TESOL have adopted an exclusively microethnographic approach, other educational ethnographers, such as Cazden (1988), Erickson (1991), and Hymes (1996), have persistently questioned the wisdom of separating the particular from the general, the part from the whole.

## CRITICAL CLASSROOM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The poststructural and postcolonial discourse perspectives outlined above offer immense possibilities for formulating the nature, scope, and method of CCDA. Although neither of the two perspectives is unproblematic and although each by itself may not be fully sensitive to classroom L2 learning and teaching, collectively they have developed a rich body of knowledge and skills that help conceptualize and conduct CCDA in meaningful ways.



## Conceptualizing CCDA

The critique of classroom discourse analysis presented in the previous section also contains some of the fundamental characteristics of CCDA. To recapitulate, CCDA is based on the following premises and principles:

- Classroom discourse, like all other discourses, is socially constructed, politically motivated, and historically determined; that is, social, political, and historical conditions develop and distribute the cultural capital that shapes and reshapes the lives of teachers and learners.
- The racialized, stratified, and gendered experiences that discourse participants bring to the classroom setting are motivated and molded not just by the learning and teaching episodes they encounter in the classroom but also by the broader linguistic, social, economic, political, and historical milieu in which they all grow up.
- The L2 classroom is not a secluded, self-contained minisociety; it is rather a constituent of the larger society in which many forms of domination and inequality are produced and reproduced for the benefit of vested interests; therefore, an analysis of classroom discourse must necessarily include an analysis of the discursive practices and discursive formations that support the structure of dominant discourses.
- The L2 classroom also manifests, at surface and deep levels, many forms of resistance, articulated or unarticulated; therefore, an analysis of classroom discourse must necessarily include an analysis of various forms of resistance and how they affect the business of learning and teaching.
- Language teachers can ill afford to ignore the sociocultural reality that influences identity formation in and outside the classroom, nor can they afford to separate learners' linguistic needs and wants from their sociocultural needs and wants.
- The negotiation of discourse's meaning and its analysis should not be confined to the acquisitional aspects of input and interaction, to the instructional imperatives of form- and function-focused language learning activities, or to the conversational routines of turn-taking and turn-giving sequences; instead, they should also take into account discourse participants' complex and competing expectations and beliefs, identities and voices, and fears and anxieties.
- Classroom discourse lends itself to multiple perspectives depending on the discourse participants' preconceived notions of what constitutes learning, teaching, and learning outcomes; therefore, any

CCDA needs to identify and understand possible mismatches between intentions and interpretations of classroom aims and events.

- The objective of language education should be not merely to facilitate effective language use on the part of language learners but also to promote critical engagement among discourse participants; therefore, CCDA should be concerned with an assessment of the extent to which critical engagement is facilitated in the classroom.
- Teachers need to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to observe, analyze, and evaluate their own classroom discourse so that they can, without depending too much upon external agencies, theorize what they practice and practice what they theorize, thus contributing to the dismantling of the debilitating dichotomy between theorists and teachers, between producers and consumers of pedagogic knowledge.

These overlapping premises and principles, I believe, can form the bases for conceptualizing CCDA.

The premises and principles also indicate that the primary function of CCDA is fundamentally different from that of the interaction and discourse approaches discussed earlier. If the function of interaction analysis is seen as normative and that of discourse analysis as informative, then the function of CCDA can be seen as transformative. Classroom interaction analysis, with its normative function, seeks to play a directive role, in effect telling practicing teachers what kind of classroom climate would be considered optimal to achieve their instructional purposes and what they need to do in order to create such a climate in their classroom. Besides, the findings of classroom interaction analysis are supposed to give teachers an idea of the extent to which their own classroom performance approximates to a predetermined model. Classroom discourse analysis, with its informative function, seeks to play a descriptive role, giving practicing teachers a profile of instructional strategies and interactional patterns and possible relationships between the two. It attempts to describe the processes internal to classroom aims and events in order to inform teachers of the possibilities and limitations facing them as teachers, information they can use to further their self-development. CCDA, with its transformative function, seeks to play a reflective role, enabling practicing teachers to reflect on and cope with sociocultural and sociopolitical structures that directly or indirectly shape the character and content of classroom discourse. It also seeks to equip them with the knowledge and skill necessary to conduct their own CCDA, thus directing them away from knowledge transmission and towards knowledge generation, away from pedagogic dependence and towards pedagogic independence.

## Glimpses of CCDA

Recent classroom-based studies reported by Chick (1996) and by Canagarajah (1997), for instance, give us glimpses of the possibilities and potential of CCDA. Chick's work is a classic example of what classroom discourse can reveal when viewed through the prism of larger sociopolitical context. He conducted a microethnographic analysis of his classroom data to find out why teachers as well as students in mathematics classes carried out through the medium of ESL in KwaZulu schools were reluctant to give up choral responses and were resistant to interaction associated with the communicative approach to language teaching. After microethnographically analyzing the data, he came to the interim conclusion that the behavior of KwaZulu teachers and students was the result of their cultural disposition, that is, the interactional style they exhibited is native to the Zulu-speaking community. This interim conclusion was the same as the one he arrived at in a study conducted in 1985, in which he analyzed interethnic encounters between a White South African, English-speaking professor and Zulu graduate students.

Later, however, Chick (1996) decided to reexamine the same set of classroom data because of his growing awareness of the limitations of microethnographic research that fails to show how the pervasive values, ideologies, and structures of the wider society condition and constrain microlevel behavior in the classroom. When he revisited the same data and analyzed them in terms of macrolevel issues of racist ideology and power structures of apartheid South Africa, he found that KwaZulu teachers and students actually colluded with each other to deliberately construct the kind of interactional pattern that he observed. He realized that the classroom discourse actually represented "styles consistent with norms of interaction which teachers and students constituted as a means of avoiding the oppressive and demeaning constraints of apartheid educational systems" (p. 37). In other words, the interactional styles followed by KwaZulu teachers and students were not an example of their linguistic affiliation or cultural identity but an expression of their oppositional tendencies.

Expression of oppositional tendencies is what Canagarajah (1997) found in a Texas classroom (see also his 1993 study about a Sri Lankan classroom) where he was teaching academic English to a group of predominantly African American students just entering college. In a critical analysis of interactive data from student conferences done through electronic media, he demonstrates how his students negotiated the discursive and ideological challenges of the academic culture and critically interrogated their classroom discourses. In deconstructing, for instance, a dialogue in which his students are discussing a passage on

recent revisions in history textbooks used in U.S. schools, Canagarajah shows how they “dramatically appropriate the text to read their own themes and perspectives, thus eventually subverting the writer’s message” (p. 181). Consider this partial extract:

- David: Yea you know it is weird how the people who write most of the history books we read in school are white. Why is that? And why does it seem that the white man in those history books are portrayed as being the better of the races?
- Sonny: Exactly. Ray. Have you heard the song by BDP (I think) that talks about the black people of the Bible?
- Dexter: i feel the reason for the distortion is because whites want to portray themselves as doing the right thing to their children since they are the majority.
- Andrew: as in the book “1984” whoever controls the present controls the past. Since the white man is in power he can belittle the role of the Indian and black cowboys.
- ...
- Amos: it’s kind of funny the only Blacks mentioned in the history books are those that have been assassinated by the white man (malcom x, and martin luther king jr.)
- Sonny: I think minorities would write their history if they could. How many companies want to publish “History of the Negro(igga)”??? (p. 182)

Canagarajah’s analysis reveals that the students here exhibit a heightened consciousness of their ethnic identity by exploring many issues not raised by the passage, thus giving additional depth to the subject. He points out that starting from

the what and how of distortions in history they go on to explore the why, and eventually probe the political-economy of textbook production that functions against minorities and sustains the hegemony of the majority groups. The written word is thus creatively given new ramifications in reference to the larger social contexts and discourses of the students. (p. 184)

Chick’s (1996) and Canagarajah’s (1997) studies treat the classroom as a site of struggle between competing discourses, a cultural arena where ideological, discursive, and social forces collide in an ever-unfolding drama of dominance and resistance. They both cross the boundaries of the classroom in order to make true sense of classroom behavior. They both interpret classroom behavior not just in terms of (socio)linguistic features of input and interaction but in terms of sociocultural and sociopolitical forces that shape that behavior. Finally, they both show that their sound interpretation of classroom discourse is made possible only

through a mode of investigation that is sensitive to participants' articulated and unarticulated responses to the symbolic violence perpetrated on them.

## Conducting CCDA: Critical Ethnography

Investigative and interpretive methods for analyzing classroom discourse have always been problematic. Practitioners of classroom interaction analysis have mostly used quantitative techniques that conceal more than they reveal of the intricacies of classroom interaction. Practitioners of classroom discourse analysis have mostly opted for qualitative techniques (with an occasional sprinkling of quantification), characterizing their research as microethnography based. Conducting CCDA, however, requires a research tool that can penetrate hidden meanings and underlying connections. Critical ethnography offers one such possibility.

Critical ethnographers are actively engaged in dealing with powerful systems of discourse. They seek to deconstruct dominant discourses as well as counterdiscourses by posing questions at the boundaries of ideology, power, knowledge, class, race, and gender. As McLaren (1995) states, the task facing critical ethnographers "is not to render knowledge as something ultimately to be discovered, but rather as social texts that are relationally produced in a multiplicity of mutually informing contexts" (p. 281). In that sense, critical ethnography is what real ethnographic research should be: "not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (Geertz, 1973, p. 5).

Given the primacy of the search for meaning in mutually informing contexts, critical ethnography renders the dichotomy between micro- and macroethnography problematic. The dichotomy, after all, is an artifact of the academy, an analytical construct that has no psychosocial reality—unless one is willing to argue that the classroom, and the participants within it, exist inside a clinical bubble protected and protectable from external contamination. It is perhaps profitable to pay attention to the fundamental changes taking place in the fields of sociology and anthropology, in which "a sense of critical reflexivity, the complexity of voice, and subject position have transformed the terms in which ethnographic research is now undertaken and written about" (Marcus, 1998, p. 3). For example, Lash and Urry (1987, cited in Marcus, 1998) have argued for a collapsing of the macro-micro distinction itself. Echoing their view, Marcus has proposed what he calls "a multi-locale ethnography." He rationalizes that "any cultural identity or activity is constructed by multiple agents in varying contexts, or places, and that ethnography must be strategically conceived to represent this sort of multiplicity" (p. 51).

Critical ethnography, then, involves the gathering of spoken and written, audio and video data from multiple sources, including interactional episodes, participant observation, and interviews and discussions with participants at different levels and at different times. It also involves thick description as well as thick explanation. To do thick description, popularized by anthropologist Geertz (1973), the critical ethnographer returns to the same piece of data again and again and adds layers and layers of description as seen through participant observation. To do thick explanation, the critical ethnographer takes into account “relevant, theoretically salient micro- and macrocontextual influences, whether horizontal or vertical, that stand in a systematic relationship . . . to the behavior or event(s) one is attempting to explain” (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1995, p. 62). Such an investigative practice recognizes the complexity of the relationship between macrocontextual factors and the researchers’ own socially determined position within the reality that they are attempting to describe, interpret, and explain.

The seemingly subjective method of critical ethnography is susceptible to adverse comments about the validity and verifiability of its findings. However, it is worth pointing out that following the positivist, empiricist scientific tradition, in which one begins with clearly identified research questions, states null or working hypotheses, and then looks for an answer from the collected data, which is then statistically verified for its validity, reliability, and generalizability, is by no means the only way of conducting critical inquiry. In the critical ethnographic tradition, research questions may evolve and change during the course of inquiry. Besides, the concept of *validity*, as Hymes (1996) points out, “is commonly dependent upon accurate knowledge of the meanings of behaviors and institutions to those who participate in them” (p. 8). Along similar lines, feminist pedagogist Lather (1991) proposes the notion of *catalytic validity*. According to her, catalytic validity points to the degree to which research moves those it studies to understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it.

## Suggestions for Further Exploration

The scope and method of CCDA presented above open up new directions for further exploration. Some possible investigative questions that might lead to useful and usable insights are the following:

- If classroom discourse consists of (socio)linguistic, sociocultural, and sociopolitical dimensions, how do we as TESOL professionals profitably explore the patterns that connect all three?

- If classroom discourse is socially constructed, politically motivated, and historically determined, how can we study and understand its impact on everyday learning and teaching?
- If an analysis of classroom discourse has to include an analysis of the discursive practices and discursive formations that sustain the symbolic violence perpetrated on participants, what investigative methods might be necessary to do such an analysis?
- If discourse participants bring to the classroom their racialized, stratified, and gendered experiences, how can we identify the way(s) in which these experiences motivate the style and substance of classroom discourse?
- If the objective of language education should be not merely to facilitate effective language use but also to promote critical engagement among discourse participants, then how can we analyze and assess the extent to which critical engagement is facilitated in the classroom?
- If the learners' voices have to be recognized and respected, how might their personal purposes, attitudes, and preferred ways of doing things be reconciled with classroom rules and regulations and with instructional aims and objectives?
- If students bring to the classroom their own forms of cultural capital, which may be different from the capital hierarchy of the external world or even of the school they attend, how can we make sure that their cultural capital is recognized, rewarded, and enriched?
- If learners and teachers are using subtle forms of subversion in the practice of everyday classroom discourse, how can we investigate the source and substance of such tactics?
- If the learners' linguistic needs and wants cannot be separated from their sociocultural needs and wants, how can we analyze and interpret the impact of one on the other?
- If negotiation of discourse meaning is not confined to the acquisitional aspects of input and interaction but includes the expectations and beliefs, identities and voices, and fears and anxieties of the participants, how might such a comprehensive analysis help or hinder the proper conduct of classroom business?
- If classroom discourse lends itself to multiple perspectives depending on the discourse participants' preconceived notions of learning, teaching, and learning outcomes, how can we identify and understand possible mismatches between intentions and interpretations of classroom aims and events?

- If prospective and practicing teachers have to be equipped with the knowledge and skill to conduct their own CCDA and achieve a reasonable degree of pedagogic freedom, how can pre- and in-service teacher education programs be recast?
- If one of the goals of CCDA is to provide a descriptive, interpretive, and explanatory account of classroom performance, how can we ensure a principled way of conducting CCDA that results in a reasonable degree of generalizability and replicability?
- If the principles and procedures of CCDA are to be adhered to in learning, teaching, and teacher education, then what actually are the costs and consequences of doing so?

Clearly, investigations of these and related questions will provide the additional insights necessary to develop a full-fledged CCDA.

## IN CLOSING

A reading of poststructural and postcolonial thoughts on discourse motivates a critical look at the discourses and counterdiscourses that shape and reshape practices in ESOL classrooms. Foucault's power, de Certeau's tactics, Bourdieu's capital, Said's Orientalism, Bhabha's hybridity, and Spivak's subalternity—all present variations of the same theme, namely, that discourses manifest power relations. The theme is simple yet barely self-evident. Only a persistent promotion of critical sensibilities, in ourselves and in others, can help us as TESOL professionals unmask the hidden relationship between individual interaction in the classroom and the wider sociocultural and sociopolitical structures that impinge upon that interaction.

The transformative thrust of CCDA, with its potential to create and sustain critical sensibilities, has serious implications not only for the ways TESOL professionals observe, analyze, and interpret classroom aims and events but for curricular objectives and instructional strategies as well. It has been pointed out that ESL learning and teaching cannot take place in a sociopolitical vacuum (Auerbach, 1995; Pennycook, 1994) and that focusing on sociopolitical themes does not come at the expense of the acquisition and retention of language skills that we hope to impart in our learners (Morgan, 1998). While endorsing those views, I would rather emphasize the importance of instructional strategies in promoting critical reflexivity in the classroom. In the context of the ESL classroom, as in any other educational context, what makes a text critical has less to do with the way its content is constructed by the author (though it surely matters) than the way it is deconstructed by the teacher and the learner.



A case in point is the hero episode narrated at the beginning of this article. Recall how Debbie's ESL students complained about her preoccupation with U.S. culture and U.S. heroes. She paid little or no respect to the students' voice, and they responded with their own subversive tactics. I believed then as I do now that the tension that prevailed in her class had more to do with her instructional strategy than with the textual content. I subtly drew Debbie's attention to this in my feedback to her. I pointed out that the theme she selected for the course was well suited for an instructional strategy that not only respected her students' sociocultural sensibilities and their sociopolitical awareness but tapped their experiential knowledge as well. I suggested that, for instance, she could start a discussion about the concept of hero and hero worship in different cultures represented in the class, ask her students to say who their heroes were and why they considered their heroes to be their heroes, and compare their cultural concepts of hero and hero worship with the U.S. perspective represented in the prescribed texts. In other words, I suggested ways for Debbie to pay attention to the cultural capital students bring with them.

By recognizing and respecting various forms of cultural capital that participants bring with them, by seriously engaging them for learning and teaching purposes, and by analyzing the resultant classroom discourse by means of critical ethnography, teachers can open themselves to alternative meanings and alternative possibilities. In that sense, CCDA does not represent a seamless and sequential progression of events and thoughts from classroom interaction analysis to classroom discourse analysis to CCDA; rather, it represents a fundamental shift in the way the field conceives and conducts the business of L2 learning and teaching.

As Foucauldian educationists Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) tell us, the term *critical* "refers to a broad band of disciplined questioning of the ways in which power works through the discursive practices and performances of schooling" (p. 4). I hope that the conceptual framework for CCDA proposed here provides a foundation for the disciplined questioning of what we as ESOL teachers do in the classroom and why we do it. With its multifaceted focus and its critical ethnographic tool for analysis, CCDA has the potential to offer rich representations of our classroom practices. And as we strive to realize that potential, we are well advised to keep in mind a sobering thought from anthropologist Marcus (1998): "You can't really say it all; all analyses, no matter how totalistic their rhetorics, are partial" (p. 37).

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### Popular Research and Social Transformation: A Community-Based Approach to Critical Pedagogy

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■ This report focuses on the application of critical pedagogy at El Barrio Popular Education Program, a community-based adult education program in New York City. It is a vignette of a more complex picture of what the participants and the staff of the program accomplished together between 1990 and 1996. During that period, I served as executive director of the organization and as the coordinator of its educational programs. The program, which was committed to the implementation of participatory education and the goals of bilingualism and biliteracy, integrated the teaching of Spanish-language literacy and basic education with ESL, computer and video technology, and popular research—that is, investigations designed, conducted, analyzed, and produced by the learners on topics significant to them.

The concept of critical pedagogy as used in this report places language at the center of the curriculum. The students' native language was used not only as an aid to learning English but also as a terrain of knowledge and a field of possibilities that linked students' experiences to collective action. The use of Spanish gave the students the opportunity to use their own reality as the basis of the literacy program and enabled them to reconstruct their history and culture (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Through the use of their own vernacular, the students produced new forms of knowledge that they made accessible to the community. They produced this knowledge by engaging in investigations—called *popular*

*research projects*—of the issues that affected their lives and their positioning in society. In this way, the program became a site where “knowledge and power enter into relations articulating conflicts being fought out in the wider society” (Giroux, 1991, p. xvii).

This account illustrates the praxis of critical pedagogy at El Barrio Popular Education Program by addressing three of its main components: (a) the bilingual curriculum through which popular research projects were conducted, (b) the involvement of participants and former participants as popular teachers, and (c) the integration of video technology as an emancipatory tool.

## BACKGROUND

### Program Participants

The participants at El Barrio Popular Education Program were women, mostly from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, who came to the program to learn to read, improve their basic education, prepare for the high school equivalency exam, and learn English. Most were mothers with children attending public schools, and most received some type of income support, especially Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). To accommodate the child-care needs of the participants, classes met in a community setting while the children were in school. Many of the women who attended the program were displaced workers, mostly from the garment industry, which had traditionally employed Latinas but which had declined considerably since the 1950s, when it employed two out of three Puerto Rican women in New York City (Sánchez Korrol, 1994). The participants were unemployed, most likely as a result of what Rodríguez (1989) has identified as the shifting and decline of manufacturing, the relocation of productive firms, technological changes in the forces of production, and blue-collar structural unemployment.

In the 1980s, the economic situation of poor Latinas in the United States worsened because of severe cuts in government spending, especially in programs designed to assist mothers and children (including AFDC, child-care and school lunch programs, food stamps, subsidized housing, and energy assistance; Trattner, 1999). In the 1990s, President Bill Clinton’s plan to “end welfare as we know it” and his signing in 1996 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act made the situation of poor women extremely difficult. The new legislation forced women receiving welfare benefits to attend a job preparation program for a maximum of 2 years, at which time states were required to end welfare benefits whether or not the beneficiary had found a job. All of these changes had a profound impact on the lives of the women in the

program and, to a large extent, shaped the curriculum. Participants who had initially come to the program because they wanted to learn to read and write and to speak English found that they were now forced to come to the program or lose their public assistance. The program was swamped with requirements to submit monthly student attendance reports in order to comply with new welfare regulations—or risk its ability to provide services to the participants.

The program, a nongovernmental, independent organization that always lacked adequate funding, was not reimbursed for the staff time required to comply with these regulations. Worse, the program risked becoming a watchdog for a policy that was clearly undermining families and the efforts of the women to better their lives.

The women participating in El Barrio Popular Education Program had varying literacy and English language needs but shared Spanish as a common language, motherhood, the experience of having immigrated to the United States, and many of the same socioeconomic conditions. These factors shaped the pedagogy implemented at the program and gave life to a curriculum that intended to question and challenge the social and economic forces behind the women's situation and that built on their strengths and forms of survival.

## The Community

During my tenure, the program changed location twice, all within East Harlem in Manhattan, New York City. The frequent moves were indicative of both the lack of adequate housing in the community and the program's constant struggle to survive financially. East Harlem, also known as El Barrio and Spanish Harlem, is the oldest continuous settlement of Puerto Ricans in the United States (Zentella, 1997). In the 1960s and 1980s, East Harlem experienced demographic changes as Cubans and Mexicans joined the Dominicans and the Puerto Ricans there. However, as Zentella (1997) states, "Puerto Ricans continue to account for the majority of its Latino residents, and El Barrio retains its significant role in the US Puerto Rican community" (p. 17).

The demographic changes occurring in the community were also evident in the program. As time passed, more Dominican and Mexican women joined the Puerto Rican women in the program. Because of family and social networks among Latinos and their linguistic and educational characteristics, most potential students learned about the program through word of mouth. As these networks expanded to other neighborhoods in the city, and because the program was one of only a few that offered educational services in Spanish along with ESL, the number of students from other Latino neighborhoods in the city, especially the Bronx and upper Manhattan, increased.



Community at El Barrio Popular Education Program was defined by the geographic neighborhood, a primarily bilingual Spanish/English community, and the services the program provided to native Spanish speakers, including literacy and basic education in Spanish and ESL. Language was thus at the center of the concept of community and was a domain of inclusion, strength, and potential. The issue of *idioma* (language) was often at the center of students' discourse. "Progresando en español . . . porque es nuestro idioma" (going forward in Spanish . . . because it is our language) was the title chosen by the students for a compilation of their writings. Being Latina also defined community at the program as shown by the title of a video produced by program participants, *Comenzar de nuevo: Latinas en la lucha por la superación* (Starting over: Latinas in the struggle for a better life).

Another factor that created community in the program was the participants' socioeconomic situation. They were united by their experiences as garment workers who had grown up poor, had had little formal schooling, and had begun to work at an early age, and by being unemployed immigrants facing social policies that they deemed unfair. The popular research projects and the videos described later in this report address some of these issues.

Men enrolled in the program infrequently. The women in the community were apparently more able than the men to negotiate the social and economic conditions that account for their participation. By far, the program was for women, and women made decisions about the program and struggled for its survival, just as the participants struggled for their own financial survival. The lack of appropriate ESL services in the city for those who were not literate in their native language made the program extremely important. In 1994, the program supported the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund and the National Organization of Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund in a class action suit that would have forced the social service departments of New York City and New York State to offer literacy and ESL services appropriate to Latinas who could read and write at less than a ninth-grade level (Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund/NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, 1994). The lead plaintiff in this lawsuit was joined by a student of El Barrio Popular Education Program after the administration of the city's social services department attempted to remove her from the program because she was enrolled in both Spanish language classes and ESL instruction. The two legal organizations involved in the lawsuit were instrumental in educating the women about their rights and learned a great deal from the women themselves about their needs. The lawsuit was withdrawn in 1996, when the city expanded its programs to offer native language literacy and the welfare reform law was enacted (Swarns, 1998).

## CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AT THE PROGRAM

### Curriculum

The intention behind the curriculum was to link the act of becoming literate with acquiring the ability to organize and combat the women's immediate problems (Ramdas, 1990). The connection between social policies and the women's individual experiences was thus made explicit.

*Bilingualism and biliteracy.* Because one of the main goals of the program was to develop bilingualism and biliteracy among the students through participatory education, El Barrio Popular Education Program integrated the teaching of literacy and basic education in Spanish with ESL. The participatory curriculum was based on the participants' past experiences and on issues that affected their lives. Accordingly, the curriculum departed from the known and the already lived, incorporating dialogue, reading, and writing in two languages with critical thinking, research, technology, and action.

The native language of the students bridged their past and future. When students are not silenced, it is through their native language that they tell their stories—their personal experiences (Rivera, 1990). Students are more able to tell their stories in the language that they speak, that they know, that gave life to those experiences, and that has the potential to convey their meaning. Walsh (1991b), referring to a pedagogy for Puerto Ricans, states,

The dualities and positioning that both political and minority status construct can be identified and analyzed in terms of subjective and collective discourses and experiences, that is, in part, in how students tell stories about themselves, their families, and communities, and the interpretations, meanings, and representations they suggest in the telling. (p. 135)

A critical approach requires students to connect their experience to larger, oppressive social patterns (Anderson & Irvine, 1993). For the program, this meant that, by sharing their stories, the women could connect their having grown up poor in Latin America to their lack of literacy. In this way, a lack of formal education was no longer an individual problem—a result of being less fit than other people to learn to read, as most of the women stated they were on entering the program. The program helped them understand that they had not learned to read as children because they were women who shared a certain social and economic background. Working with immigrant women in Australia, Bee (1993) asked them to tell or write their own stories—to look back and critically evaluate their past “to consider the extent to which they are involved in making history” (p. 124). From their individual stories,

students can make sense of the forces that have shaped their lives and affect their social reality. Because reality is collectively constructed, it is also collectively that reality can be contested and transformed.

The inclusion of the students' native language in the educational process gave them greater access to the multiple sources of knowledge available to them within their families and communities (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) and to deeper levels of social and political analysis. According to Anderson and Irvine (1993), the language chosen for reading and writing determines who produces knowledge and who has access to it. The program's bilingual curriculum enabled the students to look at themselves as the organizers of their own community and view the community as the source of their curriculum (Rivera, 1988). The bilingual curriculum also facilitated effective interactions around sophisticated content and lessened language and cultural shock (Lucas & Katz, 1994, p. 539). Consequently, the participants became partners in the educational process, and their native language became a fundamental tool for the production of knowledge, reflection, and social transformation.

*Popular research projects.* The bilingual curriculum was based on thematic units of instruction implemented at the program level. The units, which focused on issues the students regarded as important in their lives, evolved into new units on other topics, creating spiral levels of knowledge and complexity.

In 1992, the program started implementing a curriculum based on popular research units:

The El Barrio Popular Education Program in New York City uses PAR [participatory action research] as a central part of its curriculum; themes learners in that program have researched include uses of Spanish and English in various community contexts, patterns of neighborhood trash collection, and housing issues. (Auerbach, 1994, p. 696; see also the description of a bilingual curriculum unit on housing in Spruck Wrigley & Guth, 1992)

In the popular research units, the participants conducted investigations in their own communities on topics that the participants considered to have an impact on their lives and the lives of their families. The participants decided on the research questions, the methods of data collection and analysis, and the presentation of research results during class and curriculum meetings. The results of the research units were documented on videos that were later edited by the students, made available to the larger community, and shown on public-access television.

Popular research, as the term is used in this report, shares many of the characteristics of participatory research listed by de Schutter (1983): (a) The point of departure for participatory research is a vision of social

reality as a totality; (b) social processes and structures are understood within a historical context; (c) theory and practice are integrated; (d) dialogue transforms the subject-object relationship into a subject-subject relationship; (e) research and action, including education itself, become a single process; and (f) the results of the research are immediately applied to concrete situations (as described by Anderson & Irvine, 1993, p. 90). It differs, however, in that in de Schutter's definition of participatory research the community and the researchers work together. In my definition of popular research, the community and the researchers are one: The community designs, conducts, analyzes, and produces the research.

This conceptualization of popular research is in line with the three determinants of participatory research outlined by Tandon (1988), who states that "Participatory Research is the methodology of an alternative system of knowledge production" (p. 13), outlining the role of people in (a) setting the agenda of inquiry, (b) participating in data collection and analysis, and (c) controlling the use of outcomes and the whole process. He characterizes the roles of the researchers and the participants as ambiguous but clarifies that, "for us [the researchers], it becomes difficult to behave as participants in the ongoing social realities of the poor and the oppressed because we are not part of it" (p. 12). The role of the trained researcher, according to Tandon, is to contribute skills and expertise from the dominant system (classical research) to the alternative system (participatory research).

In the popular research projects at El Barrio Popular Education Program, those who had been trained in what Tandon (1988) calls the "dominant system" (p. 12)—myself, some of the teachers, and a program counselor—did not share research skills and expertise as much as facilitate the research conducted by the participants. We participated in curriculum meetings, offered suggestions, and sometimes served as subjects in the research projects.

### Popular Teachers

The program employed both Spanish-language teachers and ESL teachers. Most were Latino, Spanish-English bilinguals. To multiply the program's effects on the community, and as part of curriculum development and implementation, a group of students and program graduates worked in the program as popular teachers—teachers who came from the community of the learners, who were or had been students in the program, and who had been prepared to teach in the program. All were women who shared most of the realities of the program participants. Most were mothers with children in public schools, and all were receiving or had received some form of governmental income support.

All but one lived in the immediate geographic area, and all, including the popular teacher who lived in an adjacent community, sent their children to public schools in El Barrio. By 1995, almost half of the program's staff consisted of popular teachers who had been trained and then hired. They knew the program's philosophy of participatory education firsthand, having experienced it as students. Auerbach (1993, 1996) and Dick and McCarty (1997) have documented the importance of hiring bilingual teachers from the learners' community in order to include the stories and social realities of the community. In addition, the popular teachers created classroom environments of collective work and solidarity, leading to high student participation. Other teachers in the program shared their own knowledge with the popular teachers while learning about the community from them. In this way, the teachers, the popular teachers, and the other participants were both learners and teachers in creating and implementing the curriculum.

### The Use of Technology

The program used video and computer technology as democratic tools: Participants used them regardless of literacy level or English proficiency. As tools, video and computers were means to greater ends—the popular teachers taught participants how to use them, and the participants used them in developing and documenting curriculum and research findings. Through grants and through collaboration with the local public-access television network, the program trained and licensed people in filming, editing, and producing videotapes, which were shown regularly on public-access television. Using a video camera became an everyday activity in the program. Students videotaped classes, trips, guest speakers, themselves, and their communities. Walsh (1991b) has also documented the potential of using video in critical pedagogy in her work with Puerto Rican high school students, who filmed sociodramas on generative themes relevant to their social reality, such as “dropping out” (p. 117).

The program participants chose topics for the videos in much the same way as they planned the curriculum. Julia Vaddy, a program participant and popular teacher, explained how the topic for a video about the experiences of Latinas working in the garment industry (El Barrio Popular Education Program, 1995b) was selected:

We started talking about doing something different. It came out that many of the women in the group were interested in fashion, and that many of them had worked in [garment] factories, but had been exploited and discriminated [against]. (Perez, 1995, p. 3)

Program participants also collected and analyzed data on videotape, and they edited and produced videos documenting the results of their popular research projects. Therefore, they controlled the whole research process, from data collection to the production of a video about the results of an investigation. When asked what was accomplished by making a video about the students' experiences in the garment industry, Vaddy concluded, "What we are able to show is that we know how to do lots of things, but we aren't given the opportunity" (Perez, 1995, p. 3).

Video became a transformative tool: The women who made the videos were no longer students learning to read and write and to speak English or exploited and displaced workers of the garment industry; they became informants on their own experience, researchers, and video producers. In 1996, *Lo que hay en los vestidos: Nuestras experiencias en la industria de la aguja* (What there is in dresses: Our experiences in the garment industry; El Barrio Popular Education Program, 1995b) won first prize in the 19th National Hometown Video Awards.

Most important, video was the organizing tool through which participants came together to contest, reclaim, and transform reality. Through the process of producing the video, the participants reappropriated their individual knowledge about working in sweatshops and collectively transformed this knowledge into an empowering experience. Making the video situated them in the economic and social reality of garment workers who were unemployed not because they were women who lacked skills, as others often contended, but because of specific social and economic trends that led to the loss of their jobs. In fact, a year after the video about the garment industry had been completed, *Zoned for Slavery* (National Labor Committee, 1995) was presented and discussed in the program. The women had no problem identifying with exploited garment workers in Central America, where the garment industry had moved in pursuit of cheap labor. Video made legible the process and structures that create oppressive ideology (Anderson & Irvine, 1993).

The research units and the videos connected the program and the community. Members of the community educated the program about the various issues affecting them; and the program, through the curriculum and the research units, examined, investigated, and reflected and acted on these issues. Documenting and making the research findings available to the immediate and larger New York Latino community multiplied the educational effect of the program's activities.

The themes of the popular research units were the same for the Spanish language and the ESL classes, with each class implementing activities appropriate to its level. The fact that the whole program researched the same topic facilitated the reinforcement of language and literacy abilities across languages and encouraged students to be involved regardless of their level of literacy or English proficiency. In

addition, the common research themes meant that students could move through different class levels within the same component as soon as they were ready and could study both literacy and basic education in the Spanish and ESL components. For example, a student from a literacy class could move on to a higher level basic education class and also attend an ESL class. Moreover, using the same content for instruction across the curriculum reinforced oral and written skills in two languages.

The participatory nature of critical education derives from the interaction among teachers, students, and the methodology (Walsh, 1991a, p. 16). The popular teachers and the bilingual curriculum based on popular research units were key in bringing these three components together. A methodology through which students investigated and analyzed community knowledge to make sense of what was happening in their lives and in their communities subverted the concept of a traditional classroom. This methodology was effective insofar as it broke down the walls between school and community. The challenge was “to refuse artificial separations of the school from the surrounding environment, to refuse the decontextualization that falsify so much” (Greene, 1995, p. 11). In other words, the methodology linked what was happening in the community and in the larger society to what was taking place in the classroom. The popular teachers were invaluable in this regard; in their multiple roles as community members, students in the program, and researchers, they facilitated the connection between the program and the community.

The program’s location within the community meant that the participants had direct access to the community’s resources. Through the curriculum, participants were encouraged to venture out into the community in order to recapture the wide variety of knowledges available there. In addition, experts from the community—community members, workers in community agencies and organizations, family members, service providers, community organizers, and others—were invited to come to the program to talk with the participants. As mentioned, lawyers from two legal organizations came to the program to educate the women about their rights and to be educated by the women about their legal needs regarding welfare reform.

The curriculum also encouraged students to venture beyond the borders of their immediate geographic community in an effort to access, document, and understand outside social forces that had repercussions for their daily lives. They tried to reach toward the Other, the larger world, in order to make sense of their own. For instance, in completing a research unit about Latino immigration and the importance of exercising the right to vote, ESL learners and popular teachers visited the affluent community of the Upper East Side of Manhattan, which

borders the community of El Barrio, to interview people about Latino immigration to the United States.

This research unit was documented in *En la unión está la fuerza* (In unity there is strength; El Barrio Popular Education Program, 1996). In an attempt to understand different groups' divergent conceptions of the world and of the issues that they were investigating, the participants interviewed English-speaking men and women of different ages and ethnic backgrounds. In the video, students with varying levels of English proficiency asked such questions as "What do you think about Latino immigrants living in the United States?" and "Do you think the United States benefits from Latino immigration?" The students found that the individuals they interviewed were supportive of immigrants: "This country is made up of immigrants. Ah . . . everyone in this country is an immigrant. And, the more immigrants the better, that's what America's all about."

## CHALLENGES, STRUGGLES, AND SOLIDARITY

Most students came to the program expecting to be "educated": to sit in rows, see a teacher at the front of the room writing on the blackboard, and have textbooks that would hold the knowledge they thought they needed. In other words, new students expected to be the passive objects of the type of *banking education* described by Freire (1970), which they had observed in their own countries and in the United States. Initially, students resisted the participatory pedagogy implemented at the program, in which students and teacher sat facing each other and there were no textbooks to follow or worksheets to complete. They were not sure how they would learn in this way.

When the program began, the teachers and the students had to negotiate participatory pedagogy during class discussions. Initially, most of the teachers came from outside the community, and the program had not yet created the concept of popular teachers. As time passed and more students experienced the new pedagogy, they became its best advocates, and they would talk to new students about what they had learned through it. In 1991, the program added popular research projects to its bilingual curriculum; in 1992 the first popular teacher was hired, with others soon to follow, and video was introduced. All of these changes took place gradually, so that students adapted to and accepted the new pedagogy.

Not everyone at the program embraced participatory pedagogy in the same way. Although most of the students were involved in designing and implementing projects, some were more active than others, causing



resentment among participants who felt that they were doing most of the work. Sometimes individual classes that wanted to move faster or work on a different theme contested the integration of the research themes into all the classes in the program. This problem was resolved by allowing each class to be as involved as it wanted to be and by designing curriculum collectively during weekly meetings.

When the program introduced the use of video, the participants were excited about learning how to use the equipment, but they did not make the connection between video and learning to read. After the first video project was completed, most students wanted to be part of future projects even though they did not like the funding deadlines the program had to observe. As with the research projects, students participated in the video projects in different ways. Some of the women wanted to appear in the videos; others chose to be behind the camera filming; and others worked on transcribing, editing, and producing. However, after the first video project was completed, the women could see how video helped them become literate and gave them a voice and a presence in the community and the city. They gradually realized that video was a tool that they could utilize to tell their story.

Policies resulting from welfare reform presented other significant challenges to students' participation and morale and, consequently, to the curriculum. It also affected the program's ability to survive. Under the reform, students who had enrolled in the program voluntarily were forced to attend classes for a minimum of 20 hours a week, which most students found extremely difficult because of personal and family obligations. To retain the students, the program had to offer at least 20 hours of instruction a week per student and, as mentioned, had to report student attendance to social services but did not receive funds to support these services. Not complying with these rules meant risking the loss of the ability to serve the students. The program had to negotiate internal policies with the students in order to meet their needs and the program's requirements. These dynamics affected the relationship between the program and the students.

At the same time, struggling against unjust policies created solidarity among the program staff and the participants. In addition to the policy on welfare reform, the participants considered proposed changes to national immigration policy and bilingual education as attacks on them and their language. In response to the pressures of dealing with these issues, the students initiated discussions that led to research projects and action.

The program survived because of the commitment and solidarity among the staff and participants. At times, many staff members had to sacrifice their salaries and benefits to keep the program open. At other times, staff and students had to work extremely hard to raise enough

money to allow the program to continue. Despite receiving cameras and video-editing equipment through funding and collaboration with another agency, the program lacked educational supplies, books for leisure reading outside class, and literature to read in the classroom. The participants and the teaching staff took the initiative to keep the program facility clean and ran a food cooperative to raise funds for educational supplies. When money was scarce, the participants raffled off handmade items to raise the needed funds.

What created solidarity at El Barrio Popular Education Program was the participants' and staff's sense of ownership of the program. They were represented in all of the program's decision-making bodies, including those that hired staff and made funding and programmatic decisions. The women often referred to the program as family and expressed their commitment to its survival. Many of the staff members had been students in the program, had benefited from its services, and were committed to its survival. When the program had to move to a new location, the students and the staff moved it themselves to reduce expenses. Participants also met with funders and politicians in the constant struggle to keep the program alive. There was also a clear understanding that, for the participants as Latinas, the importance of learning to read in Spanish was paramount. To a certain extent, the survival of the program meant the survival of their own aspirations to learn to read and write in their own language, learn to speak English, and go to college.

The collective decision making among the students and the staff and the democratic principles that permeated the life of the program created solidarity among them. More than anything else, it was the power of their collective experiences in the program that linked the women to each other's struggles.

## CONCLUSIONS

The participants in El Barrio Popular Education Program came with a desire to better their lives—"para poder superarme" (El Barrio Popular Education, 1993, p. 64; 1994, p. 22). They joined the program because they believed that through education they could improve their living conditions and those of their families and community. At the program, they learned how to read and write in two languages by engaging in projects through which they collected and analyzed data about issues affecting their lives. Through this process, program participants questioned and contested these issues, validated their own knowledge, and produced new forms of knowledge that they made available to the larger community.

The use of popular research allowed the students to become creators of their own curriculum, that is, to be teachers, learners, and researchers in pursuit of answers to the questions of their daily lives. Popular research contributed to breaking down the dichotomy between subjects and objects of education (Freire, 1970) by subverting traditional understandings of the relationships between students and teachers, researchers and subjects, and schools and communities. The research carried out by the women of El Barrio Popular Education Program filled a void in the literature available to language minority communities in the United States. The program participants collectively set the agenda of investigation, gathered and analyzed the data, published and disseminated their findings, and benefited from the research results. All of these concerns are fundamental to the action-oriented research described by Auerbach (1994), Anderson and Irvine (1993), Tandon (1988), and Rivera (in press). Furthermore, the results of these investigations were disseminated in the community's vernacular and on videotape, which made them accessible to community members regardless of their level of literacy, English proficiency, or access to print. By investigating and documenting, the women of El Barrio Popular Education Program questioned the multiple social forces that created inequality in society and started to challenge those inequalities. Their research was answerable to the broader politics of social transformation (Pennycook, 1994).

The pedagogy implemented at the program departed from the students and included the community of the learners in authentic and meaningful ways. As such, the community was not only a source of knowledge but also knowledge itself. The commitment of the program to hire and train students and program graduates as popular teachers helped break down the artificial barriers between school and community. The popular teachers brought the community's ways of educating its members into the curriculum, leading to classrooms with high levels of participation and solidarity. Other teachers in the program became partners in the educational process by teaching and learning from the popular teacher and other program participants. The popular teachers had the opportunity, as Vaddy explained, "to learn and teach what I learned" (El Barrio Popular Education Program, 1995a; Perez, 1995, p. 3).

The use of video allowed the students to "tell their stories, to pose their own questions, to be present—from their own perspectives—to the common world" (Greene, 1995, p. 34). The students used video to develop curriculum and to document this curriculum in action. Video also made legible the processes and structures that create inequality.

The curriculum at El Barrio Popular Education Program recognized and validated the program participants as the sources of the knowledge and experience they needed in order to become literate—present and

active in the world—and saw the world as an unfinished place, one that was in the process of constant transformation (Freire, 1970). This was possible because the students' native language was not only used as a transitional tool to learn English. Spanish was acknowledged and used as a strength that the participants brought with them and as an important tool for reflection and action upon the world and for social transformation.

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# Participatory Education as a Critical Framework for an Immigrant Women's ESL Class

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■ In 1996 and 1997 I worked as a volunteer ESL teacher at a community center in the metropolitan Washington, DC, area that provided legal and employment services, job training, health education, and English language classes to the local Latino community. The center began in the mid-1980s as a small, grassroots operation to link day laborers, mostly male immigrants and refugees from Central America, with jobs in construction, landscaping, restaurants, and light industry. Over the years, it had expanded to include legal services, vocational programs, and English language classes. However, the original focus on the male population was obvious in all of its programs and classes, and women's participation was minimal. When I taught at the center, classes for women included sewing, word processing, health education, and a small discussion group. The lack of participation by women in all of the programs, including the ESL classes, led me to develop an ESL class for women at the center.

The focus on survival language skills and functional literacy that I observed in the ESL classes at the center provided another impetus for developing the class. Auerbach and Burgess (1985) suggest that materials used to teach survival language skills often "prepare students for subservient social roles and reinforce hierarchical relations within the classroom by precluding the creation of meaning and the development of critical thinking skills" (p. 475). A major goal of my class was to use a *problem-posing* approach to literacy (based on Freire, 1970b; see also Auerbach, 1992; Wallerstein, 1983) to offer an alternative to the narrow scope of women's programs. By focusing on issues central to the lives of immigrant Latina women (as defined by the participants themselves), I hoped to provide them with opportunities to think critically about and perhaps to effect change in their lives. In this report, I outline the practical and theoretical elements and describe successful aspects of the class as well as reflect on problematic areas I encountered. I examine two areas where this unique context may provide some insight useful to other critical literacy work: using difference as a catalyst for change and recognizing and supporting multiple perspectives on empowerment.

## SUPPORT FOR A WOMEN-ONLY CLASS

Conversations with women at the center showed enthusiastic support for a women's class. These conversations also revealed some of the barriers faced by immigrant women seeking education. Some women said they felt uncomfortable in the predominantly male classes and were hesitant to participate even if they did attend. Others were unable to attend classes during the day and felt unsafe at the center, which is poorly lit, at night. Involving participants in class scheduling and making the decision to allow them to bring children to the class averted two of these obstacles. Other obstacles, such as safety and respect at the site and the accessibility of education for women, became themes central to language learning and critical reflection.

Literature on women's literacy (Auerbach, 1989; Carmack, 1992; Cumming, 1992; Hayes, 1989; Klassen & Burnaby, 1993; Young & Padilla, 1990) reveals that gender inequities similar to those I observed at the center exist in many literacy programs.<sup>1</sup> Immigrant women face barriers to education when programs fail to consider their special needs, such as child care, transportation, and scheduling conflicts (Cumming, 1992, p. 11). Women are placed at a further disadvantage in literacy programs that do not consider gender-based differences in acculturation, cognitive development, and learning styles (p. 176). Women's empowerment may even be minimized in programs designed primarily to promote family literacy because they often place the locus of responsibility for family literacy problems on the woman herself (Auerbach, 1989, cited in Carmack, 1992, p. 180). This responsibility eclipses the importance of the woman's own education and reinforces her position as subordinate to that of her family (Carmack, 1992, p. 180).

Various forms of male resistance may also serve to impede women's participation in education. This resistance may take the form of violence or a more subtle deterrent. Rockhill (1990) suggests that when the definition of violence is broadened to include nonphysical forms, "most women have experienced the threat that their having more education, or intelligence, or ideas of their own, poses for the people they know" (p. 90). The changing balance of power that comes with a woman's ability to express herself in a dominant language may "[provoke] violence in those who feel themselves threatened or silenced by the power of her voice"

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<sup>1</sup> However, Carmack (1992) describes several programs concerned with meeting the specific literacy needs of women, including Open Book (Safman, 1986, cited in Carmack, 1992), in Brooklyn, New York; East End Literacy of Toronto (Gayfer, 1987, cited in Carmack, 1992); and Wider Opportunities for Women (Kerka, 1989, cited in Carmack, 1992).

The Laubach Literacy Action Women in Literacy/USA Project in Syracuse, New York, provides funding for women's literacy and ESL literacy projects. The Refugee Women's Alliance of Seattle is a working example of a women's literacy project focused on participatory education.

(McMahon, 1986, cited in Rockhill, 1990, p. 90). As literacy educators, we must be aware of the delicate balance of social relations within which literacy lies and of the possible, sometimes negative, outcomes for students when they seek empowerment and change in their lives. We should recognize that male resistance does not have to take the form of overt violence for a woman to censor herself and never allow the possibility of pursuing education (Rockhill, 1990, p. 103). "In situations where violence is part of daily life, and overwork already severe, it is almost impossible to find the energy to move in new directions, especially when these mean further upheaval and violence. As the entry point for further education, literacy may be experienced as a threat for women when it signifies the possibility of a change in status vis-à-vis her husband" (p. 103).

In addition to being aware of the existence and ramifications of violence as a form of resistance to women's participation in education, we as literacy educators should prepare ourselves, as Horseman (1996) suggests, for disclosures of abuse (both childhood sexual abuse and adult abuse) in women's lives that may occur within the context of a literacy class. Especially in a class that is geared toward engendering new perspectives on the powers that exist to shape women's lives and on how women might act to disengage themselves from those powers, both past and present accounts of abuse could surface. For example, for women who have been abused as adults or children and have received strong messages from abusers who want to maintain control over their victims' independence that they are stupid or unable to learn, the struggle for literacy and personal awareness may bring serious emotional issues to the surface. And as teachers of literacy, we should be aware of the possibilities for abuse in our students' lives and be prepared to explore options that will offer the support students will need in confronting those possibilities.<sup>2</sup>

Because of the marginalization immigrant women experience as a function of the gender hierarchy present in their own culture and in U.S. society, and because of their immigrant status, they especially need a safe, nonthreatening environment in which to carry out critical literacy work. As Carmack (1992) states, "given the strength of gender related hierarchy that pervades society, and the relative value of men's knowledge versus women's knowledge . . . an atmosphere conducive to true dialogue and perspective transformation would be difficult to achieve in mixed gender groups" (p. 188). Rockhill (1990) poses the question,

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<sup>2</sup> Providing information on bilingual resources for abused and battered women in the community is an important means of support. The knowledge that native language support and resources exist could be a first step in seeking help. Horseman (1996) provides a thorough discussion of how literacy practitioners can be supportive in situations of disclosure of abuse.



“Can we create spaces in the classroom for women to talk together about our hopes and fears, the effects of our actions in directions of greater independence upon family members, the implications of furthering our educations, resistances, as well as support, and strategies for pursuing our dreams?” (p. 109). My hope is that the class environment I describe here to some extent engendered true dialogue and provided an atmosphere of caring and safety that allowed freedom of expression and reflection for the women who participated in it.

## APPLYING A CRITICAL APPROACH

In developing the women’s class, I rejected the notion of language as an objective system defined by theorists and transmitted from teacher to student (Pennycook, 1990). I relied instead on Freire’s (1970a) conceptualization of literacy as “an act of knowing, through which a person is able to look critically at the culture which has shaped him [or her], and to move toward reflection and positive action upon his [or her] world” (p. 205). My goal was to create a classroom of “possibility” in which participants could experience the “opening of spaces in the imagination [to] reach beyond where they are” (Greene, 1986, p. 430); that is, spaces where student voices would be louder and stronger than the voice of the teacher and would be free to “express indignation, to break through the opaqueness, [and] to refuse the silences” (p. 441) imposed upon them by the dominant social, cultural, economic, and political forces that forge their lives as minority language speakers. When these voices are strong and articulate, others are forced to listen, and previously subjugated forms of knowledge begin to be legitimated.

My work in the classroom was guided by Freire’s (1970b) participatory education approach to literacy. I used problem posing to encourage students to question social inequities as a basis for language learning (see Wallerstein, 1983). Allowing the students to direct the development of curriculum (Auerbach, 1992), I took the role of a guide, supplying materials and language to explore themes generated by the class, through which we could explore issues central to their lives. Over the course of the class, I reflected on my role as teacher in this process. I questioned the power I wielded in the classroom as a White, middle-class, highly educated native English speaker; the efficacy of my role as one who would empower my students (Shor, 1996); and the nature of that empowerment.

The focus of my class became to create a space in the classroom and, I hoped, beyond in which students could claim the voices in which to articulate their experience. Through that very articulation of experience, participants would examine individually and as a group the causes of oppression and become more aware of the role of oppressive social,

cultural, and political forces in their lives. In telling their stories to me and each other, I hoped they would move toward validating their experience and recognizing where their personal power had led to achievements and successes. A newly formulated consciousness or awareness of their experience, I hoped, would lead to a stronger sense of identity, a realization of personal strength, and an opening of possibilities. Would an awareness of social inequities or a recognition of personal strength lead to empowerment? Would the students acquire the power to step outside the classroom and make their lives better? Would personal awareness lead to collective social change? The answers to these questions remain to be seen.

## METHODOLOGY

### Procedure

Throughout the period of involvement with this class, I kept a journal of observations of oral and written interactions from class and of my own reflections. I used a dialogic approach (see Wong, 1994) both in teaching the class and as the basis for information collection. I discussed the data with my university adviser (for a MEd in TESOL program), fellow students in a graduate research methods class, the ESL director at the community center (who was very supportive of the participatory approach even though it was not typical of the center's ESL program), and the women in my class. These discussions were fundamental to reaching a deeper understanding of the sociocultural phenomena of the classroom and the center.

### The Participants and the Class

The participants were 17 working-class Latina women from Central and South America and the Caribbean, who lived in the local community. I lived in the immediate area as well, just outside of the Latino neighborhood served by the center, and I speak fluent Spanish, which I learned while living in Ecuador. All of the student participants spoke Spanish, though their levels of Spanish literacy and formal education varied greatly. Despite similarities in their L1 and native culture, the participants' backgrounds varied with respect to age, marital status, family, social and economic class (both in their native countries and in the United States), employment status, numbers of years in the United States, prior English study, formal education, L1 literacy, and immigrant status. These differences manifested themselves in complex ways in the classroom.

The class met Saturdays for 3 hours from October 1996 through May 1997. It was offered free of charge and based on an open-enrollment

policy to meet the needs of women whose work schedules changed from week to week or even day to day. Some women, primarily those who were not working, attended every class, whereas others dropped in as their daily lives permitted. I volunteered my time, as did most of the teachers at the center.

In class, the participants generated the themes for discussion; acting as a guide, I posed issues of central concern in a language learning format (Wallerstein, 1983) and provided the language to allow participants to express themselves. Themes identified early in the class included (a) attaining better employment; (b) increasing the ability to communicate with English speakers, especially those who represented the dominant culture; (c) understanding school policies and helping children succeed in school; (d) continuing one's education; and (e) increasing the ability to negotiate cultural and social norms. Other themes emerged throughout the class, dominated by issues of family, relationships, gender equity, unfair employment practices, lack of opportunities to interact with English speakers, racial prejudices, and discrimination. Negotiating identities across ethnic, racial, and national lines also became central to the learning process.

The work of feminist pedagogy, which advocates a more "complex vision" (Weiler, 1991, p. 455) of liberation pedagogy, beyond Freire's universal rendering of oppression, helped me understand the many experiences articulated by the participants in my class and navigate the tension, frustration, and hostility that sometimes accompanied our work. By examining the divided experience and varied truths of the oppressed, Weiler suggests, teachers can uncover "the contradictions and tensions within social settings in which overlapping forms of oppression exist" (p. 453). This perspective of "nonsynchrony of oppression" (McCarthy, 1988, cited in Weiler, 1991, p. 453) was particularly relevant to the structure of my class. Women experience multiple realms of oppression and marginalization. They do not always act together to question or fight oppression. The differences inherent in the backgrounds and experiences of the participants and the complexity of the relationships among these women from different countries, religions, and socioeconomic classes manifested themselves in various forms of hierarchy in the classroom. Freire's vision of universal oppression and the idea that the oppressed "will act collectively to transform the world" (Weiler, 1991, p. 453) when they see themselves in relation to it was seriously challenged. Obvious differences among the participants, escalated by their relationships to me (the power center of the class in many ways, although I did not want this position), led to power struggles, which at times led to new understandings.

## DISCUSSION

There were obvious successes in using a critical, participatory approach to literacy with this group of women, including the development of solidarity among participants, an increased sense of identity, the exploration of woman-centered issues, and the emergence of and focus on different learning styles. Throughout the class, the women commented that they felt special being part of the women's class. New relationships were formed, and women began to see themselves as a community with shared needs and goals and began to rely more on each other for help. For example, the participants began to offer one another rides to class and share child care. They also shared in bringing food and materials to class.

The women in the class favored discussion and storytelling, in which they shared experiences and gave and took advice, over a directed lesson format. They often controlled the flow of the class, many times arguing difficult points in their native language. Because the female participants generated the themes and led the development of curriculum, classes often coalesced around themes that might be considered inappropriate in a mixed-gender group. Women could speak candidly and act freely regarding issues on which their opinions and views differed from or threatened those of their male counterparts. The participants were engaged and often assertive while negotiating serious themes and were comfortable with the use of dialogue as the foundation for the class.

The dominant means of language learning in the class was the promotion and sharing of life journeys. From the first class, women shared aspects of their lives that had brought them to their common geographical ground. I provided pictures, songs, poetry, art, and any other cues I could to generate discussion and reflection on our personal lives. I include myself here because I also told my stories and reflected on how I had come to be where I was. I often promoted discussion of differences in such areas as social class, religious background, and sexual orientation.

One such discussion culminated in comparisons of photographs from magazines depicting women and families in different cultural and class settings. Women who were Hispanic and Black (the backgrounds of the women in the class) in the pictures I chose were shown in low-income, sometimes impoverished settings, whereas White women appeared in dazzling, luxurious backgrounds. In small groups, the students talked about the differences between the pictures and how they felt about them. A discussion of wealth, poverty, class, and privilege ensued. The women expressed envy, dislike, and distrust of the White women in the pictures and a sense that they could never attain what those women had. They expressed sympathy and empathy for the women of color. The

women invented lively stories to describe the pictures and composed them with help from me and one another. They developed role plays to illustrate and experience these stories.

Issues that arose in class were sometimes delicate and problematic, both for me as a teacher and for the participants. For example, although disclosures of domestic violence never surfaced, some women faced opposition to their participation in the class. In several classes, women discussed ways to assert their desire to attend class without upsetting the balance of power in their homes. In one case, a woman's husband had told her that the class was interfering with her housework and child-care responsibilities. On the days we had class, she rose at 4:00 or 5:00 a.m. to do the shopping and housework and prepare her family's meals. She brought her two daughters, ages 9 and 11, to class, and together we provided them with books and school-based work. The daughters also helped take care of, and teach, younger children who came to class with their mothers.

### Difference as a Catalyst for Change

Interestingly, the successes of this class often coalesced around differences in the backgrounds of the participants. The class's struggle with these differences often engendered meaningful discussion and activities. Students had different goals in terms of language learning, empowerment, and critical awareness and brought with them varying degrees of formal education and a multitude of life experiences, which created a classroom in which difference was often more obvious than similarity. We used these differences as a basis for exploration and negotiation of hierarchy and inequality. In confronting differences within the class context, we developed tools with which to view ourselves more objectively. For example, we learned to look behind initial, sometimes hostile, reactions to individuals different from ourselves to create strategies for interacting. We learned to think about and express our anger and mistrust constructively. Students practiced their voices. They experimented with thinking and exploring their feelings about issues they had simply reacted to in the past. In articulating their experience verbally, they legitimated themselves, strengthening their identities, which were sometimes resonant and sometimes dissonant with those of others in the class.

By focusing on life journeys and personal histories, we legitimated the experience and prior knowledge each student brought with her into the classroom and used these to help define the changes women wanted to make outside the classroom, for example, completing a General Education Diploma, going to college, passing the citizenship test, and helping children succeed in school.

Through role plays (e.g., a mock job interview or confrontation with a coworker), storytelling, and discussion of women's lives, we created fertile ground for understanding, instruction, and change. An excellent starting point was each woman's story of coming to the United States. One young woman from Guatemala, with very light skin and 2 years of college in her country, was treated coldly in the class until she told her harrowing story of illegally crossing the U.S. border. Perhaps sensing a shared experience, a group of Salvadoran women in the class, about 10 years her senior, took her under their wing and introduced her to their network of connections in the community. With their help, she got a job as a nanny and housekeeper. Further discussions revealed that she had higher expectations for work, but she was glad to be secure for the present.

At times, solidarity was achieved with great difficulty. The women in the class had strong emotions and sometimes narrow views of one another. They were sometimes supportive and cooperative, and at other times condescending and silencing. Competition arose based on age, national origin, differences in the use of Spanish, and educational background. For example, when a new member from Peru, who was literate in and spoke a refined form of Spanish and a bit of English, joined the group, some members of the class were outraged. "Why is she here?" they questioned in Spanish. "¡Ya sabe!" (She already knows!).<sup>3</sup>

When faced with the cultural differences that created distance and hostility between group members or between students and myself, I tried to follow and model Noddings' (1986) idea that relationships based in caring and fidelity strengthen the dynamic between teacher and student. I came to feel that this was a very natural way for women to react to one another, because there was often a foundation of support, caring, and understanding beneath the other emotions in the class. Out of the class's struggles emerged the qualities of strength, leadership, nurturing and caring, and solidarity.

## Empowerment

Empowerment, one of the primary goals of a participatory education framework, was a central problem in the class. Just as a universal rendering of the concept of oppression obscures the experience of individuals, a blanket definition of empowerment limits the success of participatory education. I reflected on various aspects of empowerment in an attempt to arrive at a more meaningful and complex rendering of

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<sup>3</sup> Klassen and Burnaby (1993) note that immigrants in Canada viewed a low level of Spanish language literacy as a deterrent to progress in learning English and as the mark of a second-class citizen within the ethnic community.

the concept. Then I asked, for example, Empowerment for whom? Who is empowering whom? What does my definition of empowerment have to offer the participants of the class? How do the participants view themselves in terms of having power or not having power? Is empowerment important to participants in a collective sense, or are they concerned with specific, more immediate power struggles in their lives?

These questions arose out of what appeared to be cultural differences with reference to notions of power. I identified with a goal of empowerment, which I defined loosely as the means by which or the extent to which one is in control of one's own existence, or one's ability to make decisions and carry out actions independent of the coercion of others. For me, this power to act was intricately woven into the fabric and politics of language (and I wanted my students to see this and act on it). It was also directly linked to the collective empowerment of women through the feminist movement. I could see empowerment on a political level. I was aware that women could have access to power, and I consciously participated in the struggle to develop power for women. I had had a privileged upbringing that stressed individual rights to power, at least on a philosophical level.

How did the student participants define empowerment? Many of the women in my class came from societies in which equal access to power is neither an ideological norm nor the providence of the majority. This, in itself, is often the reason why they chose, or were forced, to leave their country of origin. For these individuals, relationships of power can be difficult to question.

In the classroom, the participants often remained silent when empowerment was discussed in terms of relationships of power on the societal level. When empowerment was put in a personal context, the dialogue was much richer. Although they did not always define it as such, the women in the class had high levels of personal empowerment. They were heads of households, often responsible for several children and an extended family. They had left difficult situations behind and had gotten themselves, often alone, to a new country. They provided stability in the form of wages, food, shelter, clothing, and transportation for their families. They belonged to church groups and were involved in community work. They supported their children in school by helping with homework, meeting with teachers, and working through the paperwork of the school systems, often in a language unfamiliar to them. They sought education to better themselves, learning English in order to better navigate their new, sometimes hostile, cultural environment. They had experienced the relations of power and social interactions of the English-speaking culture, and they were claiming the right to speak outside the classroom. This reflects a high level of investment in the

target culture (Peirce, 1995) and a certain ability to attain the right to speak.

By telling their stories, the women in the class drew strength from their personal victories and, as the class progressed, talked more about the oppressive cultural and social forces they confronted. They also listened to my stories and expressed solidarity where difference had previously been dominant. The class began to serve as a forum for questioning the power structures that dominated our lives. Participants shared stories of discrimination, heavy demands made by employers, low wages in return for hard work, and frustration with not being able to communicate with employers and teachers. They expressed concern that English speakers sometimes took advantage of them because of their lack of understanding of the language, and they felt limited in their participation in the English-speaking community that surrounded them, noting that they felt closed out and had few opportunities for interaction. Moreover, they began to feel that learning English offered a way to increase their power in many of the situations above. I, in turn, realized that in teaching English it is necessary to teach language that relates to the lives of the participants and that helps them strengthen their concepts of self and community and confront the oppressive forces in their lives.

## CONCLUSION

Giroux (1988) reflected that although literacy may not be emancipatory in itself, it is “the precondition for engaging in struggles around relations of meaning and power” (cited in Pennycook, 1990, p. 309). The goal of the participatory education in this class was to work in the direction of empowerment through language learning. Yet I found that my own political view of empowerment sometimes thwarted our efforts. When we focused on the articulation of the participants’ experiences and personal achievements, we validated the power they had to make changes in their lives.

Validation was a first step. Personal awareness and legitimation are borne out in small changes in individual lives: asserting oneself, over the wishes of a spouse, to go to class; studying for the citizenship exam; getting a job; studying English; using the library. I believe that this class provided a safe space for the growth of a small, nurturing, and supportive community, where a dialogic process allowed previously silenced individuals to articulate their personal experience, unmasking the link between the personal and the political. It created a secure space where people could question, experience and talk about difference, and consider new possibilities.



Bee (1993) asserts the “necessity to begin with students’ own lives as a backdrop against which to study and analyze the larger issues concerning the social and the political” (p. 111). This resonates with my own realization that, for the women with whom I shared this experience—and probably for myself as a woman as well—the personal is the political. This realization is the first step toward collective social change: individual women recognizing their personal worth and beginning to wrestle with the social norms that have repressed them, small groups of women struggling to understand themselves and each other when difference looms more obvious than similarity.

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## Between Discourse and Practice: Immigrant Rights, Curriculum Development, and ESL Teacher Education

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■ In a conversation about literacy in the United States, Freire (Freire & Macedo, 1987) spoke about his own need to keep lessening the gap between his political/pedagogical beliefs, or discourse, and what he does as a teacher, his practice. “Narrowing the distance between discourse and practice,” he says, “is what I call *coherence*” (p. 135). Coherence as defined by Freire was a goal of the participatory teacher education project outlined in this report. In it, teachers and teacher educators tried to articulate their theories and align them with practice while collaboratively developing a textbook. Coherence became an overarching goal, along with improving the quality of ESL instruction in Chicago’s community-based organizations (CBOs) and creating an environment in which teachers could create “the critical capacity to consider and participate in the direction and dreams of education” (p. 139).

In this report I describe the model of participatory ESL teacher education that evolved through this work. I use the term *model* cautiously, as it implies replication of techniques in other circumstances, which is problematic for a critical ethnography. Rather than explain techniques that would yield the same results in any circumstance, I describe an

evolving process that is uniquely tied to its historical and social context. The questions explored include the following:

1. What roles do teachers and teacher educators adopt in the classroom?
2. How do teachers participate in their own education?
3. How do teachers think about and use textbooks?

Pondering these questions in the context of this project might offer a starting place to the reader who wants to undertake similar work in another situation.

## PROJECT FOUNDATIONS

In 1994, the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Foundation funded a collaborative curriculum development project initiated by the Chicago-based Heartland Alliance for Human Rights and Human Needs to improve the quality of ESL instruction in CBOs in Chicago. Five CBOs participated in the 2½-year project. Some were chosen because of their years of providing ESL services in the area, and others because they represented the demographics of Chicago's many immigrant communities. Still others became involved because of an interest in the project's goal of empowering teachers through the process of curriculum development. Teachers and administrators from centers catering to Latin American immigrants and to Polish immigrants made up the majority of the participants, but others came from centers serving immigrants from a variety of backgrounds. The participants varied widely in terms of experience, from those with years of teaching experience to those who had been teaching only a short time. For example, one teacher had written an English grammar text published in her native Poland, and another had entered the classroom as a teacher for the first time just a week prior to the project's inception. Some of the teachers shared cultural and linguistic roots with their students, and others did not. Of the 12 teachers involved in the project, 2 came to it with a critical pedagogical stance, 2 came with more grammar-based approaches, and the remaining 8 had relatively unarticulated ideas about their own teaching practice. Many of them called what they did *student-centered* and *life-skills* teaching. Although a few of the teachers had master's degrees in TESOL, the majority had bachelor's degrees in history or other fields only tangentially related to language teaching.

Entitled *Empowerment Through Curriculum*, the project had goals that were in line with Simon's (1992) definition of *empowerment* as "the opportunity and means to effectively participate and share authority" (p. 143). Working together from different backgrounds and contexts, the participants were to create some kind of curriculum document, and the hope was that in so doing they would be able to shape their own learning

experiences. In the process, perhaps they would come to think more broadly about curriculum.

The academic discourses about how best to educate people for the complex task of teaching are many and varied. Some theorists (e.g., Gage, 1978, 1984) have viewed teaching as a mostly technical matter, and others (e.g., Grossman, 1990; Gudmundsdottir, 1990; Shulman, 1987) have critiqued this view as oversimplified and monodirectional, proposing that teaching instead requires the mastery of a body of knowledge that must then be “translated” for students. But these views, although an improvement over a purely mechanistic view, leave open the question of just what a teacher’s knowledge base should be. Does the act of teaching itself constitute a knowledge base? Arguing that theories of teaching cannot stand outside of practice, Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) see the practice of teaching and the knowledge derived from it to be the core of a teacher’s knowledge base. Building on this view, Richards and Lockhart (1994) emphasize that critical reflection on one’s “attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices” (p. 1) can be a foundation for teacher education. Expanding on this theme, other theorists (Perl, 1994) question the teacher-student role dichotomy by focusing on the ways in which teachers and students can learn together, and some researchers (Goodson & Cole, 1994) have shifted their focus beyond the classroom to consider the ways in which teachers’ identities evolve both through the act of teaching and through contact with a teaching community.

These perspectives on teaching and teacher education have shifted the focus from technique to knowledge base to praxis—the place where theory and practice meet. But an essential component is still missing: the sociopolitical context of education. Giroux’s (1985, 1986; Giroux & McLaren, 1986) work on teacher education has refocused attention on the structural inequalities that have deskilled teachers and homogenized their vision of who students are and how they learn. Giroux (1985) sees teachers as “transformative intellectuals” who can think in ways that connect social critique with “the language of possibility” (p. 379) leading to positive social change. In this view, knowledge is inexorably tied up with power, but because teachers are not trained to understand the workings of power and oppression in their lives and the lives of their students, the resulting pedagogy prevents students from finding their authentic voices. Grounding his ideas in Freirian pedagogy and cultural reproduction theory, Giroux (1986) understands all teacher education to be “a construction in values and ideology” (p. 23) in which advanced capitalism’s need for cheap, usually immigrant labor is intertwined with the school’s charge to produce new, assimilated Americans. What addresses these inequalities and leads toward social change is authentic dialogue between teachers and learners in a relationship that legitimizes

both partners as knowers and situates knowledge as something constantly constructed and contested. Scholars approaching teacher education from this direction include Giroux (1985, 1986), Giroux and McLaren (1986), Auerbach (1992), Bartolome (1994), Lather (1986), González (1995), González, Amanti, and Tenery (1994), Moll and Diaz (1987), Moll and González (1994), and Savage (1988), among others. All have theorized or designed research projects that proceed from the premises that students and teachers are knowers, that knowledge is created through dialogue, and that unequal power relations can be confronted and begin to be transformed in educational settings.

Most closely related to the work described in this report is the Funds of Knowledge project (González, 1995; González et al., 1993; Moll & Diaz, 1987; Moll & González, 1994), in which researchers collaborated with teachers to gain access to the knowledge of working-class Latino families and then used it in the classroom. In this project, the teachers went into their students' households and conducted ethnographic research on the kinds of knowledge that existed there. The goal of this work was as much to rewrite the curriculum so that it built on students' knowledge as it was to experientially challenge Anglo and Latino/Latina teachers' deficit models of their students and their students' homes. Both *Empowering Teachers Through Curriculum* and *Funds of Knowledge* use curriculum development to help teachers examine their classroom attitudes and behaviors and, in the process, see teaching and learning in a larger social context, whether a child's family environment or an adult learner's immigration experiences. Moll and González (1994) argue (following Goodson, 1991) that in order to have an effect on classroom practice, ironically, the classroom must not be the center of attention, as it is often the most contested, "exposed and problematic aspect of the teachers' world" (Goodson, 1991, quoted in Moll & González, 1994, p. 442). Teacher education programs that orient teachers beyond the classroom and outside their traditionally defined roles have the potential to guide teachers toward new stances in the classroom as well as toward broader understandings of their students. "Capitalizing on cultural resources for teaching," Moll and González (1994) write, "allows both teachers and students to continually challenge the status quo—in the case of working-class students, the status quo means rote-like, low level instruction" (p. 451). In both of these projects, teaching has been positively affected by directing the teachers' gaze toward the larger social context in which teaching and learning occur and offering them a structure with which to bring those insights back into their teaching.

## METHOD

One's research methods reflect the kind of questions one wants to ask. Because the questions that interest me deal with how this model addresses or does not address issues of inequality in the classroom, in teacher education, and in teachers' interactions with textbooks, critical ethnography was the most likely methodology to employ. With the goal of exploring and transforming these unequal relations, I chose to critically consider my own emic experiences in this project through retrospective analysis along with triangulation techniques, such as analysis of the teachers' journals and biweekly evaluations, and participant observation. Situating my own knowledge as a teacher educator in the project (Haraway, 1988) decenters the traditional view of scientific objectivity, but as Pennycook (1994) has argued, instead of making everything subjective, situated knowledge questions the subject-object dichotomy, calling for a deeper understanding of personal and cultural location. A critical examination of my role as a teacher educator in the project offers an opportunity to gain an emic perspective that is seldom tapped in this kind of research.

A fundamental goal of critical ethnography is, as Savage (1988) suggests, "to create knowledge that will increase awareness of the contradictions and distortions of our present unjust arrangements" (p. 7). Looking critically at my own actions, at those of the teachers, and at the teachers' evaluations of the whole 2½-year experience makes apparent some of the structural problems of the project and some ways to reinvent it.

Every method has its limitations, and I have alluded to some of the potential problems with this approach above. For example, depending solely on my own recollection of events would be problematic, but checking my perceptions with other participants has lessened this concern. Relying on participants' journal entries and bimonthly evaluations runs the risk of teachers' portraying themselves only in a good light or of their writing to please the facilitators. Although this may have been a problem initially, the comments quickly became critical, probably aided by the frequency of their writing (in weekly journals and biweekly evaluations) as well as the sheer duration of the project. At least part of the reason for the teachers' commitment seems to be that their employers had recommended them for the project, the teachers received time off from work to attend the weekly sessions, and the teachers were paid to be there, sometimes in addition to their salaries. These incentives encouraged people to stay involved, and once the textbook project was decided upon, many teachers expressed a strong desire to see it through to completion.

## THE PROJECT

Empowerment Through Curriculum began with workshops organized by the project director, Aliza Becker, and administrators from each of the five CBOs. Aliza explained that she wanted the process to embody the goals of critical pedagogy, and she invited the involvement of teacher educators such as Gail Weinstein and myself, who also shared these ideals. However, not all the center administrators embraced this view equally, and there was tension around how much the administrators might invest in seeing their own views become the focus of the process and the text. As time passed, this issue became less pressing, due in part to Aliza's negotiating skills, other demands on administrators' time, and a general commitment among the teachers and teacher educators to a participatory process.

### Building a Knowledge Base

This first part of the project was intended to provide teachers with a shared knowledge base about language learning and a variety of ways to think about curriculum. Although many of the workshops in this initial phase of the project were well received (especially Gail's session on learner-centered narratives), participants were offended by some of the more "canned" presentations and preferred to have time between workshops to absorb the ideas. This frank feedback, which was given toward the end of the knowledge base-building segment, set the tone for the textbook development portion of the project.

One of the later sessions in the knowledge base-building period, on how to lead focus groups, had a powerful impact on the teachers. The goal of the focus groups was to find out what content students wanted to learn in their ESL classes. The teachers conducted the focus groups with their own students, aided by translators when necessary. Many teachers reported that they had never listened so carefully to students talking about their lives. Student after student spoke of the need to know more about immigrant rights in the United States. People wanted to know what their rights were if the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) were to come to their workplace. They wanted to know how to obtain driver's licenses while being undocumented and how to become legal residents. These focus groups occurred at a time when anti-immigrant sentiment was on the rise, as evidenced by the passage of California's Proposition 187 and increased INS raids in the Chicago area. Immigrant rights was clearly the content that learners wanted, and the silence about it in most published texts was deafening. Auerbach (1985) has pointed out that "what is *excluded* from curricula is as important in shaping students' perceptions of reality as what is *included*" (p. 480). The almost

total lack of materials on this subject made the teachers even more interested in creating a text.

### Deciding on a Project

When the teachers determined that the curriculum document they wanted to create was a textbook, Aliza asked me to get involved in the project because of my background as an editor of ESL books for adult learners and as a teacher educator. The majority of the teachers were excited about creating a textbook, and it was because of their interest that we proceeded as we did. A few of the teachers, however, were unhappy with the idea because they saw textbooks as a homogenizing force in the classroom that took the focus away from more student-centered concerns. The teachers who began the project with a more critical stance were initially the ones most opposed to a textbook project, but as the work proceeded, they came to support the idea, becoming particularly excited about the field-testing stage. Our emphasis was more on the process of textbook and curriculum development as a tool for teacher education than on producing a best-selling text, a focus that proved most fruitful in this setting.

### Creating a Textbook Together

*Establishing a vision statement and format.* I asked the teachers to come up with a vision statement in which they would articulate the group's ideas about language and culture, state their beliefs about language learning and teaching, and outline the audience for the book. Although this is a common first step in textbook publishing, it proved difficult in this context. First, the teachers were from different teaching environments, and they had not yet done anything together as a group even though the sessions thus far had involved discussion and debate. Secondly, although the teachers had come to share certain ideas through their discussion of the presentations, they had different philosophical approaches to teaching and were at varied stages of being able to articulate those differences. And finally, several teachers mentioned that having to discuss their philosophies at the beginning of the project was too abstract for them, too divorced from practice. After the field-testing phase, they were much more able to articulate a group philosophy because it had emerged through practice. What had been too challenging at the start of the process became nearly effortless when requested at the right time. Although the vision statement was put aside and not completed until near the end of the project, a couple of teachers noted that having to grapple with these ideas, although painful, helped them think about the principles beneath their actions during the field-testing phase. Perhaps



just bringing up questions of philosophy early on would have been enough to plant the seeds that would later become the vision statement, which evolved into a kind of inductive outline.

Next I asked the group to create a thumbnail sketch of the format of a chapter (exercise types and lengths and their placement in the chapter). With some guidance and examples from other texts, this stage went fairly well. After that the teachers developed a scope and sequence, choosing chapter topics based on themes that had emerged from the focus groups. Although this phase was challenging, many teachers commented later that these activities helped them understand how texts are constructed and made them think about how they use textbooks in their classes.

Gail's workshop on learner-generated narratives had inspired the participants to consider learners' stories as texts, and they decided to open each section with a student story. These vibrant stories dealt with topics that seldom find their way into published texts, such as the path to legal residency in the United States; driving; the rights of undocumented people; and issues of discrimination, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. Many of the exercises came from students' suggestions, such as a listening exercise based on the outgoing telephone message at the INS, and discussions about problems such as not getting paid because of one's undocumented status or being accused of stealing while working as a domestic. A team of legal experts reviewed each chapter, making clear the differences between state and federal jurisdictions and helping us make the book useful to teachers and learners throughout the United States, not just those in the Chicago area.

***Writing and field testing.*** The actual writing of the text involved a great deal of trial and error in order to find a process that worked within the grantor's time frame. At first I suggested that the teachers work in small groups to write different chapters of the text. This technique was not successful. One group produced a chapter that was more than twice the length that had been agreed upon. Another group debated for long periods of time and came up with nothing. After just a few sessions, it was clear that the process needed to be revamped. Instead, each group chose a leader, and the goal of the group became not to write the chapter but to make suggestions about what types of exercises and themes ought to be included in the chapter. I would write the chapter according to these suggestions, and the teachers would critique what I had written. The teachers were more comfortable with what they were being asked to do, and we were more able to keep to a schedule. After the chapter had been reworked a number of times, it was ready for field testing. We soon learned that making numerous revisions on the first draft was not nearly as useful as allocating more time to field testing. Hindsight made it clear

that two field-testing phases instead of just one would have tapped the teachers' knowledge and challenged them appropriately, making the best pedagogical use of the situation.

The teachers field-tested the chapters with their students, resulting in essential feedback on ways to improve the text. We learned which exercises came alive in class and which ones fell flat. The teachers invested great amounts of time in preparing for each class and creating supplemental materials, and they reported that students' interest soared. Students offered crucial critiques of the immigrant rights content of the text along with comments about the language development component. Chapter revision went quite smoothly; the teachers wrote extensive comments on the text and shared them with the entire group. A number of teachers said they were ready to consider the vision statement again after the field-testing phase.

In an evaluation conducted soon after the field-testing phase, Aliza noted that certain teachers seemed to make a powerful connection between the written text and the act of teaching after they had engaged in field testing. Because the text was substantially altered as a result of the insights gained through field testing, knowledge that comes through practice was validated. A number of teachers stated that they were beginning to think of texts as more malleable than they had before. One teacher noted in a biweekly evaluation that the topics in the text "provided outlets for ideas and frustrations that, before the class, many students had only expressed in their native language to people who were of the same ethnic background." She said that she saw the text as an impetus for students to share ideas, feelings, and information with each other and that, because the text centered on students' life experiences, it changed with every class that used it. Field testing seemed to help the teachers think about texts and how to use them in less rigid ways.

The teachers wanted to be sure that the text invited students to express themselves in ways that were useful and as entertaining as possible. Although the topic of driving may seem like a strange one for an ESL text, students' interest in the topic was overwhelming. The text includes questions about driving that were echoed by many students, such as the following:

- What happens if I don't take the pollution test for my car?
- If the police stop me and take my driver's license, how can I get home?
- What is the maximum number of people that can be in a car?
- How do I drive in the snow?

The driving chapter included exercises using car vocabulary and an exercise in which students write and perform one dialogue about being

stopped by the police in the United States and another dialogue about being stopped by the police in their native countries. After writing and practicing their dialogues, students compared ways of speaking in each cultural context, and the results were often comical. Other examples were deadly serious, such as the following student story, entitled "Crossing Into the U.S."

I always wanted to come to the U.S., and when I got married my husband brought me. I was afraid because I was alone with another, a coyote,<sup>1</sup> and I prayed to God to protect me and for nothing bad to happen. My husband told the coyote to take me only to Laredo, Texas, but he didn't understand well. He took me and eight men to San Antonio, Texas. I was very worried because I didn't hear anything from my husband, and my husband didn't hear anything from me. When he finally communicated with the coyote, my husband was very angry. The coyote said, "Well, we brought her here. It costs \$1,000 more." We paid it for nine years. I didn't go back to Mexico so the same thing wouldn't happen, and because I was scared of immigration.

The questions that followed began by asking about the details of the story, moved to more personal applications, such as "Can it be dangerous to come to the United States from your country? Why or why not?" and concluded with more open-ended ones, such as "Some people take risks to come to the United States. Why do they take these risks?" Although some parts of the text were more inspired than others and issues of continuity were ever-present, the text led the teachers to grapple with the realities of their students' lives. Because the text centered on a topic of vital concern to students, it promoted meaningful dialogue among learners and teachers that is seldom tapped in traditional texts.

From my point of view, field testing marked a point at which many of the teachers began to critically analyze textbooks. Those who began with less articulated philosophies and those with more grammar-oriented approaches began to point out the problems not only with this text but with others they were using. Those who came in with more critical approaches had tended to dismiss textbooks altogether, so like some of the more traditional teachers, they had not developed critical approaches to using textbooks. Although I did not begin my piece of the project with an overt affirmation of the knowledge that emerges from classroom dialogue (asking for a vision statement at the beginning valued academic knowledge, not praxis), field testing validated the acts of teaching and learning as legitimate ways of knowing. This validation allowed the teachers to confront other classroom authorities, such as

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, a coyote is a person who gets paid to help people without immigration papers cross the border from Mexico to the United States (i.e., a smuggler).

textbooks, and to place more value not only on their own knowledge but on their students' knowledge as well.

Although the textbook development segment produced what seemed to be important results, there were also significant roadblocks that threatened to lead the project down the wrong path. At the beginning of the textbook development work, for example, certain teachers (by no means all of them) deferred to my status as a publishing professional, which threatened to reinscribe the authority of texts and those who produce them over the knowledge that teachers and learners create together through dialogue in the classroom. Aliza and I were dismayed at this turn of events, and neither of us knew quite how to address it. Luckily, as we addressed another issue—the challenge that the teachers were facing in writing exercises for the text—we found the solution to this conundrum instead. Because the teachers were finding it difficult to work in groups to write the chapters, I presented a session in which we analyzed some exercises in published texts. I thought this would help the teachers think about how to construct the kinds of exercises they wanted to use. We talked about what might happen when trying to do these exercises in class, and we discussed the methodological implications of the exercises. The teachers were shocked to find that many exercises published in well-known texts were flawed and that they could improve upon those exercises. Demystifying these texts had a significant effect on the teachers' work on this project as well as on their thinking about textbooks in general. It also solved the problem of privileging my publishing knowledge, because once the limitations of the texts were exposed, my status began to fade. This critiquing of published texts did not, however, have the desired effect of preparing the teachers to write the chapters. Instead, as mentioned previously, the process was adjusted so that the bulk of their work involved making suggestions for the chapters and critiquing the drafts.

## DISCUSSION

As a result of this project, teachers came to rethink their roles in the classroom, take more control of their own educational experiences, and think differently about the ways they interacted with textbooks.

### Rethinking the Teacher's Role

Many of the teachers confronted fears about teaching in the area of immigrant rights, a content area that was new to them. Some expressed anxiety about not being qualified to provide answers as to how visas are granted, and this anxiety made them hesitant to take on the subject matter at all. But when they heard other teachers' success stories, the

more reticent teachers began to act differently in the classroom. One teacher said, "My knowledge of the content was not high, and I often couldn't answer specific questions. However, I tried my best to direct them to resources they could utilize." A shift in the teacher's roles had begun. Teachers and students were starting to ask questions together, engaging in what Freire (1970) calls the "hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 53). Sometimes students knew more than the teachers did, and the teachers learned to listen. At other times students had misinformation that the teachers and students worked together to unravel. Teachers no longer dispensed knowledge—they facilitated it. In these classrooms, the content was not the only thing that was problematized and debated; the teacher's and the student's roles were contested as well.

### Getting Involved in Educational Decision Making

From the field-testing phase onward, the teachers became immersed in shaping their educational experiences in this project. Although they did not always know what they wanted to learn, they developed definite ideas about how they preferred to learn it, and from early on they wanted to have a role in the decision making. Freire and Macedo's (1987) notion that "the educator must help learners get involved in planning education, help them create the critical capacity to consider and participate" (p. 139) in educational decision making was probably the part of the project that blossomed without our conscious effort. Once people were involved in the process, their participation increased with every new stage. However, the project's entire framework (from the building of a knowledge base to the development of a text) was defined not by the teachers but by the project director and the CBO administrators. One regret is that the teachers were not involved in the initial stages of planning the project. As the project progressed, however, the teachers' views came to shape the project more and more. The teachers noted that their students seldom had the opportunity to affect the direction of their own education in this way. It was our hope that these experiences might lead the teachers to find ways for their students to have more decision-making power in their education as well. A number of teachers echoed the notion, expressed here in a weekly journal entry, that an outcome of this project was their "taking more time to listen to students' concerns, making fewer assumptions."

### Learning Through Critical Reflection

Along with increased involvement in their educational experiences, the teachers made some substantial changes in their thinking about varieties of English, their use of published texts, and their confidence in

creating their own materials. In one session, the teachers gathered to pore over the student stories they had selected. My goal for the session had been to raise questions about how they would edit these works and to guide them toward establishing a preliminary editorial policy. Many of the stories were very moving. They described, for example, the fear of being picked up by the police while driving without a license, experiences with discrimination, and the ordeal of crossing the border to the United States without papers. Early on we agreed that spelling would be standardized, and we discussed the fact that nearly everything that is published in English is edited before it appears in print. Didn't the students deserve the same courtesy? But how far should the editing go? Nativizing the texts was not the goal. And a story that was moving to one person was unintelligible to another. Teachers questioned the power position of learner Englishes in relation to that of standard English. They thought aloud about teachers and learners expecting to find standard English in textbooks. They considered the effects of the smallest editorial moves toward standard English, and they reveled in the beauty and authenticity of their students' writing. Thinking aloud about their own responses to standard English and learner Englishes, they imagined what a learner might feel about a given change. Berlin (1988) has stated that "a way of teaching is never innocent" (p. 492) and, at that moment, it seemed that no "improving" of a text was innocent either. The teachers' final decision was to ask the student authors if they would like to rewrite the pieces. All of the writers agreed to do so. After the rewriting, the teachers and students together decided that the pieces needed only light editing. This experience was an example of our stumbling upon a learning context to which the teachers were ready to bring their critical skills. When confronted with this task, the teachers critically analyzed issues of language and voice and produced knowledge through their dialogue. These moments were truly thrilling.

As the project came to an end, many of the teachers told us that they felt their ability to critique the usefulness of a textbook had increased substantially. The process of critiquing versions of a text and then field testing it had helped them articulate what worked in an exercise and what did not. One teacher said that he was beginning to see how poorly written most grammar exercises really were. A number of teachers said that they found they were better able to "adapt or improve textbook exercises to meet classroom needs," as one teacher expressed it on a final project evaluation form, because of their participation in the project. One administrator noted that, because of their involvement in Empowerment Through Curriculum, the teachers worked more efficiently on some curriculum projects than he had expected. He also observed that the teachers involved in the project had "become more confident as representatives of our agency to the outside coalitions and committees."

He concluded by saying, "Finally, one participating practitioner drew energy, in no small part, from this project to complete her last requirements for her MA in adult education. Leadership has developed here."

## CONCLUSION

Although the text had its limitations as a final product (e.g., the student stories were vibrant, but the activities around them were sometimes dull; information on such topics as documenting sexual harassment was rather bureaucratic and not always applicable), it still was a valuable tool for teacher education. The process of developing the book led the teachers to think more deeply about their role in the classroom. It helped them teach beyond the confines of the classroom, articulate their teaching philosophies, work collaboratively with other teachers, and adopt a more critical attitude toward textbooks and their authority in the classroom. It taught us as teacher educators to analyze the epistemological assumptions behind our steps and to be more conscious of privileging academic knowledge over knowledge gained through praxis. That is, the workshop brought us to apply Freire's (Freire & Macedo, 1987) concern with coherence to our practice as teacher educators. We hoped that these ESL students had come to see themselves as knowers and creators of knowledge, both through the subject matter of immigrant rights and by commenting on the text.

The approach to teacher education taken in Empowerment Through Curriculum can be a powerful way for adult education teachers to move beyond the topics of survival texts and international jet-set books to find out what their students really want to learn. Conducting focus groups, which is practical for teachers in most settings, is one way to engage in this. A more organic way to start a textbook project may be for a teacher educator to write a chapter and for teachers to field-test it, make changes, and then field-test it again. A project could also begin with the rewriting of a published text. Of course, each situation poses its own challenges, but we found that the synergy between an evolving text and the teachers and learners who used it was a powerful force. Although creating textbooks from the idea to the bound book is not an option for many programs, a smaller piece of this kind of project is also highly worthwhile. Because this model involves the constant collection and incorporation of critical feedback, it offers ways for participants to identify and, it is hoped, transform unequal relations of power.

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## Critical Literacy: Challenges and Questions for ESL Classrooms

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■ In recent years, concerns with ideology and the social distribution of power have had a substantial impact on the fields of language and literacy education. This impact has manifested itself in new ways of theorising language and literacy development and, in particular, with an increased interest in critical literacy in both mother tongue and ESOL education. However, data from classrooms with significant numbers of ESL students suggest that a number of questions with important implications for ESL teachers and their students remain unresolved. These questions include the following:

- To what extent does development of an effective critical literacy in English presuppose control of mainstream literacy practices?
- To what extent do critical literacy programs introduce students to the cultural and linguistic resources necessary for them to engage critically with texts?
- What recognition is there of the time and effort required on the part of both teachers and students to develop such resources and of the need for explicit and systematic teaching in order to assist students in this development?

In this report we explore these questions by discussing a case study of a lesson in a science/literacy program. Before turning to this program, however, we explain how we understand the term *critical literacy*. We then locate the questions against the background of ongoing debates—particularly in the Australian context—regarding the nature and value of critical literacy.

## CRITICAL LITERACY

In our understanding of the term critical literacy, we start essentially with the premise that language and other social semiotic systems work together to construct the cultural and social realities within which people live (Halliday, 1993). We recognise that within every culture an interplay of social ideologies, identities, and power relations works systematically to advantage some people and disadvantage others. We see the role of critical literacy as assisting students in developing insights into the ways in which those ideologies, identities, and power relations work in society and the ways in which language works to entrench and challenge those relations. We also see critical literacy as opening up options for students to resist or challenge the status quo if they so choose.

Broadly, we define critical literacy as the ability to engage critically and analytically with ways in which knowledge, and ways of thinking about and valuing this knowledge, are constructed in and through written texts. We regard the ability to read *resistantly* and write *critically* as central aspects of critical literacy, particularly within the context of school education. In order to take account of the differences between written and spoken modes of language and their equally important but different roles in learning (Halliday, 1985; Hammond, 1990), we restrict our definition of literacy, and hence of critical literacy, primarily to ways of engaging with language in the written mode. In doing so, we recognise the crucial role of talk in all literacy practices, including critical literacy practices (Barton, 1994; Edelsky, 1996). We also recognise that some others adopt a more inclusive definition of critical literacy that incorporates talk as well as engagement with other semiotic systems (Luke, 1993; Walton, 1996).

So what does our definition of critical literacy look like in the science/literacy program we studied? The science teacher whose work we discuss in this report held the view that scientific knowledge is essentially a social construct and that, as such, it can become the subject of review and critical questioning. She viewed her role as a science teacher as initiating students into core understandings and ways of “doing science” while at the same time encouraging them to reflect analytically and critically on the role and impact of science in society. That is, she saw her role as

helping students use their scientific knowledge to critique uses of science and scientific technologies. For her, the relationship between science and society was a pivotal focus of any science/literacy program.

In relating science to society, the teacher subscribed to Lemke's (1990) argument that learning science is learning the language of science. Thus, there was considerable talk in her classroom about science and its impact on society. Students read and analysed texts about science written by others and by themselves. There was also considerable talk about the nature of language patterns of written texts—especially those which construct scientific knowledge.

We elaborate further on the nature of critical literacy in one unit of this science/literacy program in later sections of the report. In discussion of the unit, we focus on the development of criticality, especially in the written mode, in English (i.e., we leave aside issues of criticality in students' mother tongues). In Australia, English is the dominant language, and students' access to the complete range of life choices is dependent on effective control of English. Our particular interest lies in assisting students in developing such control. Prior to discussing the unit, however, we turn to some of the debates about critical literacy that have taken place particularly in the Australian context in recent years.

Current debates in Australia have focused on the relationship between social ideologies, identities, and values on the one hand and development of the linguistic and other codes that realise these on the other (Hasan, 1996; Luke, 1993, 1996; Martin, 1993). In recent years, mainstream literacy education in Australia has included explicit teaching about the genres of key curriculum subjects as well as more conventional aspects of literacy, such as comprehension of texts and word recognition. (In this report we use the term *mainstream literacy* to refer to the teaching of all of these aspects of literacy.) However, some proponents of critical literacy (Lee, 1997; Luke, 1993, 1996) have argued that although the teaching of key genres may help some individuals gain access to the discourses, texts, and genres that have accrued cultural capital, such teaching does nothing to change the power structures that privilege these and that give rise to inequality in the first place. They argue that the position adopted by genre theorists serves to reinforce—even reproduce—existing privileges, inequalities, and power structures. Luke (1996), for example, writes,

A salient criticism of the “genre model” is that its emphasis on the direct transmission of text types does not necessarily lead on to a critical reappraisal of that disciplinary corpus, its field or its related institutions, but rather may lend itself to an uncritical reproduction of discipline. (p. 314)

In responding to such criticisms, proponents of genre theory have argued that literacy programs should at least be “reproductive” in their

provision of opportunities for access to the powerful discourses and genres of mainstream culture. They argue that not to be reproductive, in this sense, is to be socially irresponsible by failing to provide students with opportunities to gain more equitable access to these discourses of power. They suggest that it is the already disadvantaged students from non-English-speaking backgrounds and other minority groups who are further disadvantaged by programs that do not address such issues (Christie, 1996; Gray & Cazden, 1992; Martin, 1993). They also maintain that learning about genres does not preclude critical analysis but, rather, that control of the linguistic resources associated with the study of genres provides a necessary basis for analysis and critique of texts. Delpit (1988), writing from a different context, makes a similar argument in relation to the education of African American students. Wallace (1992), in her work with adult EFL learners in the United Kingdom, emphasises control of linguistic resources as part of her program on critical literacy.

Our own recent research in Australian primary and secondary classrooms with large numbers of ESL students (Hammond, 1995, 1996; Macken-Horarik, 1996a, 1996b, 1997) leads us to sympathise with the position of genre theorists in this debate. Our case study data provide examples of literacy programs in which teachers successfully combine analysis of ways in which linguistic resources work to construct meanings with analysis of the ideological positioning of curriculum knowledge. Our interpretation of this data leads us to believe that access to both cultural and linguistic resources, and the means to critique them, is crucial for critical engagement with textual and cultural practices. We have found that, without this double focus, ESL students either remain stranded in commonsense ways of interpreting texts or become overly dependent on teachers' guidance and assistance in the study of specific texts, even within programs that aim to incorporate a critical perspective.

Perhaps most importantly, we have also found that any effective critical literacy program has a long lead time in an ESL classroom. Engaging with the meanings of texts requires much time and effort on the part of both teacher and students. Such engagement includes an awareness of alphabetic codes, comprehension of texts, recognition of the cultural significance of specific genres, the ability to construct well-formed and cohesive texts, and the ability to undertake reflexive and critical analysis of texts. Our argument is that students will be able to undertake effective analysis and critique of any text only when they are able to engage with the text. We believe the pedagogical implications for ESL students are clear: They cannot be expected to run before they can walk.

In posting this cautionary note, we do not suggest that critical literacy is an add-on or extra available only for advanced students. Indeed, we would argue that critical perspectives can effectively be incorporated

throughout a program. However, we also argue that an effective critical literacy program needs to take into account the pedagogic time and effort involved in learning to make resistant readings, deconstruct texts, subvert genres, and create new genres. There is a corollary to this claim: In order to address the goals of critical literacy in other than superficial ways, programs for ESL students need also to engage effectively with the requirements of the mainstream curriculum. We would therefore describe the relationship of critical to mainstream literacy as one of dependency rather than add-on.

## BUILDING CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC RESOURCES IN AN ESL PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY

Through discussion of a unit of work in the science/literacy program, we elaborate the arguments made above and explore the challenges faced by teachers and ESL students in the implementation of a critical literacy program. The unit of work presented here focused on human reproduction and was developed as part of a biology program for Year 10 Australian secondary school students. The goals of the unit were

- to develop students' understanding of the processes of human sexual reproduction and of the technologies for intervening in or altering the outcomes of human reproduction;
- to analyse the ethical and social issues arising out of new reproduction technologies;
- to develop students' understandings of the language and literacy resources deployed in talking, reading, and writing about such issues.

In our description of the unit, we make two major points. First, critical literacy is central to a unit such as this. Clearly, science has a huge impact on human lives, and developments in fields such as human reproduction raise real moral and ethical issues. Students must be aware of such issues, be able to contribute to debates about them, and be able to engage critically with texts that build and report on such scientific developments. Second, the unit illustrates the amount of work that we believe is required for ESL students (and others) to develop the necessary control of current scientific knowledge and of language to be able to undertake serious critical analysis in English. The description of the unit that follows elaborates this second point.

### Establishing a Common Knowledge Base

The teacher, Margaret, began work on this 10-week unit by reviewing and establishing a common knowledge base for all the students in the class. This early work included discussion of terminology and its applica-

tion to diagrams, flowcharts, and cloze comprehension exercises. The students spent time discussing different stages of egg development in the female, they drew up a table summarising events in the first 12 days after conception, and they wrote an initial explanation of how the sex of a child is determined. Such work on fertilisation developed the necessary prior knowledge for the students to be able to understand the in vitro fertilisation (IVF) procedure to which they turned next. This early work also took the students beyond a localised experience of sexual organs and their functions into biological and technical recontextualisations of these issues. The work on IVF began with the students watching a video on the procedure. They made notes as they watched the video and then wrote a short explanation of the IVF procedure based on these notes.

Text 1 is Hoa's first written explanation completed within this unit. Hoa, a student of Vietnamese background, had been studying English in Australia for 2 years at the time the unit was taught, and his work was typical of other ESL students within the class. We include a sample of his written work here to illustrate the extent to which he was able to engage with mainstream literacy practices at this point in the unit.

#### Text 1: Hoa's First Text

IVF stands for In-Vitro Fertilisation. It mainly affected by women or male reproductive organs do not function properly as it required.

The method IVF is by removing eggs from the ovaries into a test tubes, and the fertilisation is done through by men masturbation.

Once the action took place the ova has be sperm and fertilise and then it transfer back into the woman ovaries, there the egg can be develops into an human child.

This kind of operation cost \$1000 or \$1500.

Text 1 provides evidence of the level of control of written English and of the kinds of problems experienced by Hoa and others at this point in the unit. The text does not define IVF, its description of the situation of typical IVF participants is unclear, and it is difficult for the reader to reconstruct the activity sequences of the IVF process from the text. In fact, some of the sequences in the text are simply inaccurate—for example, fertilisation does not occur as a result of masturbation, and the egg does not immediately develop into a human child. Hoa has confused some terms (e.g., *eggs* and *sperm*), and it is clear that technical terminology is simply a problem for him—especially when it comes to using the appropriate terms to fill out the activity sequences. In addition, he has some problems with sentence grammar—especially with the tense system of English. His text is not fully coherent, nor does it provide an effective explanation of the IVF procedure.

## Focusing on Language

After a few weeks' initial work on human reproduction, Margaret temporarily halted the work on science in order to focus explicitly on the genre of explanation—a genre that is important in the study of science. At this point in the unit, language itself became the field of study.

The students' earlier efforts in explaining how the sex of a child is determined had provided the teacher with information about their starting point in regard to the genre. Because the students had undertaken little prior work on the study of genre, Margaret introduced the class first to key written genres typically encountered in the study of science. These included explanations, reports, procedures, expositions, and discussions (see Halliday & Martin, 1993). The teacher and students discussed the relationship between genre and social function, and the students worked in groups to analyse the social functions of various genres as well as similarities and differences in their language patterns. The class's focus then narrowed to a more detailed comparison of explanations and reports. All the students participated actively in discussions of differences between these two genres.

Following this, the teacher provided a model explanation. She spent time discussing rhetorical stages of the genre and directed the students' attention to some of the important language patterns, such as the technical verbs that are central to an explanation of the IVF procedure. She provided a very clear and explicit written framework for the students to follow in their initial work on explanations, which they drafted first in small groups and then independently. That is, at this point in the program Margaret provided very strong *scaffolding* (Bruner, 1983; Gray & Cazden, 1992) for the students. In doing so, she introduced a shared language for talking about language with the students (i.e., a meta-language). We revisit discussion of the value of metalanguage later in the report.

The students' first formal explanations were highly reproductive and amounted to little more than filling out their teacher's board notes. However, with scaffolding, they were able to write texts that both were scientifically accurate and exhibited quite good control of the explanation genre.

The students then moved back to the field of science and to more demanding work on inheritance. They investigated Mendelian inheritance—including the nature of recessive and dominant inheritance and its impact on characteristics such as nose shape and hair colour. At this stage, Margaret encouraged the students to integrate their developing control of the genre of explanation with their developing knowledge of science.

In the remaining weeks of the unit, the students were required to complete the following writing tasks:

- Task 1 Explain the process of in vitro fertilisation.
- Task 2 Write a letter to a couple who have embarked on the IVF program. Explain to the couple why it is that their child may be different from them.
- Task 3 Explain how the material of inheritance may be changed.

The cognitive demands placed on the students in writing these explanations became increasingly complex. They moved from more material sequences about IVF to more theoretical ones about changing the material of inheritance. The students were thereby introduced to a chain of increasingly complex intertexts that built on each other with respect to scientific knowledge. The earlier work on explanations made it possible for the students to engage with the more rigorous work on science. As Margaret explained,

The language they're using shows me what they're learning. You can't write an explanation of a process unless you really understand it. Writing an explanation forces you to come to an understanding of how one event is logically related to others.

Text 2, an explanation written by Hoa in response to Task 3 ("Explain how the material of inheritance may be changed"), provides evidence of his and other students' increasing control both of scientific knowledge and of the genre of explanation.

#### Text 2: Hoa's Later Text

Explain how the material of inheritance can be changed. The material of inheritance can be changed. This can happen in two ways.

Firstly natural events which mean that the effects can be caused by the errors in the number of chromosomes, or changes in individual genes. Changes in the number of chromosomes can cause severe health problems in human beings. Example of the bad effects of the wrong number of chromosomes is called Downes' Syndrome. Downs' Syndrome caused by having three of one of the chromosomes rather than the normal two. Another mutation disease is known as Gene Mutation. For this to occur when a gene mutation is produced during cell division a mistake occurs as the chromosomes are doubled. The best known mutation of a human gene is the one producing Sickle Cell Anaemia. The mutation occurs in the genes that produce haemoglobin. This is a pigment that gives red blood cells their colour and which carries the oxygen in the blood. Sickle cell anaemia results from just one of these amino acids being the wrong one.



Second is genetic engineering. This means man have developed new technology to change the sex chromosomes in whatever ways they wish to. The most known Genetic Engineering is Gene Splicing.

Text 2 suggests that Hoa has quite a good understanding of the scientific principles involved in the material of inheritance. This is evident in the technical terms that he uses (e.g., *chromosomes, genes, Down's Syndrome, mutation, haemoglobin*), in his classification of changes in material of inheritance into natural causes and genetic engineering, and in the details of the effects of errors in numbers of chromosomes and in gene mutation.

This text also suggests that Hoa has made considerable progress in his control of the written genre of explanation. His introduction to the phenomenon under discussion (the material of inheritance) is still rather minimal, but he does provide a framework for discussion of how change occurs (through natural events and through genetic engineering), and he uses this framework to organise his text—even though these two sections are somewhat unbalanced. Generally he shows good control of sentence grammar, although at times he has some difficulty with verbs (either verbs are omitted, or subject-verb agreement is inconsistent). Overall, he has good control of spelling and punctuation. Text 2 provides evidence that the activities included in this science unit assisted Hoa and other students like him in developing both specialised knowledge of science and control of mainstream literacy practices.

### Engaging Critically With Texts

But what of the critical literacy component of classroom work in this unit? How was it interrelated with the development of the more mainstream aspects of scientific literacy? How were the students assisted in developing a critical orientation to their topic of study, and how were they assisted in engaging critically with texts that they encountered as part of their study?

During the unit, the students talked and read widely around the field. Their reading included textbook material as well as newspaper and magazine articles on issues such as IVF, DNA fingerprinting, gene splicing, cloning, and genetic engineering in general. They regularly spent time discussing issues that such materials raised. The students also watched and took notes from videos on sex determination, IVF, and surrogacy—all of which treated specialised knowledge as problematic in one way or another.

Thus, Margaret did not wait until the end of the unit to move into more reflexive work on these issues. She emphasized the relation between science and society throughout the unit. However, her classroom interventions had a rhythm that we regard as very important. She

asked the students to consider an issue only when they knew enough about the science behind it to be able to do so from an informed base. For example, the students discussed the issue of who had the greatest claim to the child in the Donor Gamete Program—the donor of the gamete or the woman whose uterus supports the growth of the baby. The students' ability to participate effectively in this discussion and understand the complex moral issues involved was dependent on their understanding of how the program works and the roles that different people play in it. In later lessons, the teacher and students talked extensively about the costs of advances in genetic engineering, taking up issues such as the dangers to future generations of errors in genetic experiments or the possibility of new forms of germ warfare.

At regular points in the unit, the students' attention was also drawn to the role of the news media and of other publications in reporting developments in science. The teacher and students discussed the kinds of assumptions made in the media and other texts about progress in science and about the nature of scientific expertise. In addition to reading about and discussing the social consequences of scientific knowledge, the students also wrote about relevant issues. For example, one of their final tasks involved answering questions related to news reports about advances in genetic technology. The students were presented with articles about cures based on these advances and were required to apply their scientific knowledge in critiquing such texts. Thus the critical orientation to the topic of study that was encouraged throughout the unit involved talk as well as reading and writing.

Towards the end of the unit, as the students took up a more independently critical perspective on the field, Margaret stepped back from her instructional role, and the students assumed more control of both the content and the pacing of the lessons. At this point, the students made greater use of discussion, critique, and evaluation in their spoken interactions as well as in their reading and writing. Text 3 gives an indication of the extent to which the students were able to draw on their knowledge of science and their control of the appropriate genre to engage in more critical analysis of the field. Text 3 was written by Beth, a student from an English-speaking background, also in response to Task 3 ("Explain how the material of inheritance may be changed"). Her text, of which only the final three paragraphs are shown here, was typical of the kind of writing that other such students produced at this time.

#### Text 3: Beth's Text

Today, with all our wonderful technology, it is now possible for scientists themselves to change genes. It is called genetic engineering, involving joining together genes in new and, they hope, helpful ways. One example is the combining of a bacteria and an insulin gene. This has been successful in

producing insulin for diabetics, but could prove fatal if a lethal type of this bacteria is accidentally formed.

Genetic engineering has already been tried on animals and one achievement is having changed fruit flies' eye colour. It is now the humans' turn. Doctors can change the genes in human eggs when they are in test tubes, and try to get rid of genes causing inherited disorders. Here again, they could make mistakes, creating deformed children.

If this is further developed, scientists could create the sort of egg they want in a laboratory. They could specifically make people, clones, to do certain things. Inheritance would mean nothing then, because the child wouldn't really have any parents. Already it is causing big moral problems and they can only get worse.

Although the critical analysis in the text is still somewhat embryonic, this text, like texts produced by other students in the latter part of the unit, talks about reproduction technologies in new ways. Beth has acquired a confident grasp of the biology behind genetic mutations and genetic engineering and is now also able to contextualise this knowledge socially. Although she acknowledges the hopes of scientists, she also distances herself from these hopes. This text indicates a new meta-awareness on Beth's part, one that is able to both reconstruct and evaluate scientific processes. Her final text demonstrates initial progress into the domain of the reflexive and the critical in her written texts.

What about ESL students who are struggling with the mainstream literacy requirements of the discipline of science? What about Hoa's development of critical literacy during this 10-week unit of work? Text 4 is one of Hoa's final explanations—a text produced under examination conditions and therefore one that was written completely independently. In this task, the students were presented with a diagram of a woman's reproductive organs and asked to explain why diseased or damaged fallopian tubes would stop a woman becoming pregnant.

#### Text 4: Hoa's Final Text

The disease of damage fallopian tube will stop a woman fallen pregnant because once the tube is damaged or blocks, the eggs can no longer travel from the fallopian tube to the uterus. If the fallopian tube is damage the sperm would not be able to travel along the tube into the ovary to fertilise the eggs.

Towards the end of the unit, Hoa was able to read articles in English that raised complex ethical and moral issues associated with reproduction technology, and he participated in discussions about such issues. That is, a critical orientation to the topic of study began to be evident in his ability to read and engage critically in English with written texts and to talk analytically about the issues raised in these texts. However, he did

not produce much in the way of written critical texts in English during this unit.

What Text 4 does reveal is Hoa's increasing command of field knowledge. He has quite a good understanding of technical terms, and he uses them to fill out the relevant activity sequences. His use of circumstantial meanings, realised through prepositional phrases, enables the reader to build a clear picture of these sequences (e.g., "disease of the fallopian tubes," "from the fallopian tubes to the uterus," "sperm would not be able to travel *along the tube into the ovary*"). Although quite short, the text is basically coherent and cohesive. Readers other than the teacher could reconstruct the relevant activity sequences from the text alone. In addition, apart from some minor flaws to do with verb choice (e.g., *fallen* instead of *falling*) and consistency of tense (e.g., *damaged or blocks* instead of *damaged or blocked*), clauses are combined appropriately into grammatically well-formed sentences.

Thus, Text 4 provides evidence of Hoa's increasing control of the explanation genre and more generally of the written mode. It also suggests that his ongoing development of critical writing in English is dependent on his ability first to control the mainstream literacy requirements of the discipline. His development within this unit, we believe, suggests that critical literacy poses real challenges for him and for other similar ESL students.

## QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR ESL CLASSROOMS

Hoa's development within this unit of the science/literacy program raises more general questions and challenges for ESL classrooms.

To what extent does development of an effective critical literacy in English presuppose control of mainstream literacy practices?

This question draws attention to the relationship between critical literacy practices and mainstream (and perhaps more mundane) literacy competences in English. It also draws attention to the relationship between discipline-specific knowledge and critical perspectives on this knowledge.

In the science/literacy unit described above, the teacher actively initiated her students into the field of human reproduction and its technologies and into the literacy demands of these aspects of science. These students were first assisted in moving from everyday and common-sense understandings of human reproduction, towards understandings of specialised technical and scientific knowledge, and from there into more critical perspectives on the field.

We would argue that an initiation into the specialised fields of

scientific knowledge constitutes an initiation into the cultural resources that are an essential part of the study of science. Through the activities in this unit, the students learned about ways of doing science, about what counts as scientific knowledge, and about the ways in which scientific knowledge differs from everyday, commonsense knowledge. In developing these cultural resources, the students engaged in extensive reading and discussion as well as in writing about technologies of human reproduction.

In addition, the students developed a critical orientation towards issues and dilemmas raised by these developments in science and their impact on consumers' lives. The program thus encouraged the students to view issues arising from human reproduction from multiple perspectives—those of the citizen, of the expert, and of the critic.

Without a firm foundation in discipline-specific knowledge and its necessary epistemological and cultural resources, these students would not have been able to engage in any serious way with critical perspectives towards the complex moral and ethical issues raised by reproductive technologies. Further, we would argue that without ongoing and systematic assistance in developing the English linguistic resources that enable students to talk, read, and write about that knowledge, critical perspectives would not have been possible. This argument is borne out by the written texts produced by the students in our case study classroom. Whereas both Hoa and Beth showed evidence of critical engagement with issues in their talk and in their reading, there were considerable differences in their writing, as demonstrated by Texts 2 and 3, written in response to the same task. The two students began the unit at very different points in their control of the spoken and written modes of English. As a result, Beth was able to build on and go beyond mainstream science to produce texts with at least the beginning of a critical orientation to knowledge, whereas Hoa was still struggling. This difference does not diminish Hoa's achievement over this 10-week period but shows that further development of critical writing for Hoa was dependent on his control of the cultural and linguistic resources necessary for critical engagement with written texts.

To what extent do critical literacy programs introduce students to the cultural and linguistic resources necessary for them to engage critically with texts?

First, in line with many proponents of critical literacy, we take seriously the notion of language as a social semiotic (Halliday, 1978, 1993; Lemke, 1990; Luke, 1993). By this we mean that language, like other cultural semiotic systems, is a system for making meanings and that choices available within this system are meaningful. For ESL students such as

Hoà, this view of language has important implications. A semiotic view of language implies that it is very difficult to deconstruct the ideological and cultural assumptions inherent in any text without also directing students' attention to the ways in which those assumptions are constructed.

In the program described above, the teacher deliberately taught the language of science along with knowledge of science. She also provided a systematic introduction to a functional metalanguage. This talk about language ranged from discussions of the choice (and function) of technical and other vocabulary items in science texts, to the importance of headings and subheadings in organising written texts, to the significance of specific ways of using punctuation in terms of the author's intended meaning, to patterns of rhetorical organisation and grammar in the explanation genre, and so on.

This systematic focus on the linguistic choices that are made in the construction of written texts and the development of an associated metalanguage facilitated quite detailed discussions of written texts. As the unit progressed, the students incorporated this metalanguage into their own use of language and began using it in ways not envisaged by their teacher. They became increasingly independent of their teacher in their analysis of texts.

Our research, reported here and elsewhere (Hammond, 1995, 1996; Macken-Horarik, 1996a, 1996b), suggests that systematic discussion of language choices in text construction and the development of meta-language—that is, of functional ways of talking and thinking about language—facilitates critical analysis. It helps students see written texts as constructs that can be discussed in quite precise and explicit ways and that can therefore be analysed, compared, criticised, deconstructed, and reconstructed. Awareness of what writers have chosen to include, as well as what they have chosen to exclude, assists students in focusing on the kinds of assumptions that writers make and how, as readers, they are positioned by these assumptions.

What recognition is there of the time and effort required on the part of both teachers and students to develop such resources and of the need for explicit and systematic teaching to assist students in this development?

Learning to engage critically with texts takes time. The unit described earlier took place over 10 weeks. During this time, both the teaching of science and the teaching of the language of science was gradual, carefully sequenced, explicit, and systematic. It was intensive and involved considerable work on the part of both teacher and students.

In addition, as we argued earlier, we do not regard the teaching of critical literacy as an add-on or extra for advanced students, and we

suggest that critical perspectives could be incorporated effectively throughout a program of study. This is precisely what happened in the science unit. At regular intervals throughout the unit, the teacher explicitly encouraged the students to take a critical orientation to the ways in which scientific knowledge was constructed. However, as we pointed out earlier, the students used their developing knowledge of science to critique the texts that they encountered and in turn to take a critical orientation to the ways in which scientific knowledge was constructed in specific written texts. Thus, the unit shunted between developing and extending the students' scientific understandings of particular phenomena and taking a critical perspective to the ways in which these phenomena were represented. Each perspective facilitated the development of the other, and in this way each was in a dependency relationship with the other.

For students such as Hoa, the emphasis on mainstream language and literacy teaching provided crucial support in engaging, first, with knowledge of the discipline and, second, with critical perspectives on this knowledge. Hoa showed that he was beginning to develop a critical orientation in his reading and in his participation in class discussions, although not yet in his written texts. However, without the time-consuming, careful, and systematic work that was evident in Margaret's unit of work, we believe that he and other similar students would have been left without the means of engaging effectively in either mainstream or critical literacy.

## CONCLUSION

In this report we have argued broadly in support of critical approaches to TESOL in the field of literacy education. However, we have suggested that a number of questions remain to be resolved in the implementation of such approaches and that these questions have important implications for ESL students. We have drawn on one science/literacy program as a case study to explore some of these questions and to propose responses that take account of the needs of ESL students.

By its nature, teaching is not neutral. In developing any program, a teacher selects and privileges certain aspects of content knowledge and of language. The teacher decides whose voice(s) will be heard and whose silenced. The challenge is not so much to avoid reproducing the status quo, as some proponents of critical literacy have argued, but rather to make visible the content knowledge that is chosen in any program, explain why that content has been chosen, and then provide systematic and carefully sequenced support that will enable students to gain access to the cultural and linguistic practices underpinning that content knowledge.

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## Debates in SLA Studies: Redefining Classroom SLA as an Institutional Phenomenon

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When language is systematically unavailable to some, it is important that we not limit our explanation to the traits of the persons involved; it is equally essential that we take into account the interactional circumstances that position the people in the world with a differential access to the common tongue. (McDermott, 1996, p. 283)

■ This passage parsimoniously captures pivotal aspects of a debate currently taking shape in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) between sociocultural and psycholinguistic perspectives on learning and language development. Broadly defined, a sociocultural perspective of development takes as a starting point an understanding that the origin and structure of cognition are rooted to the daily social and cultural practices in which an individual participates. Participation, in this sense, is how an individual carries out activities with others through the use of physical objects, or *artifacts*, and symbolic sign systems, or *psychological tools* (Lantolf, in press; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). By extension, the

study of SLA from a sociocultural perspective is the study of the context in which an L2 user is situated and the ways in which he or she uses physical and symbolic tools in interactions with others (see Lantolf, 1994; Lantolf & Appel, 1994). In contrast, a psycholinguistic perspective on SLA, broadly defined, reverses the primary focus from society to the mind because the mind is assumed to impose structure on language. As such, the goal of SLA research from a psycholinguistic perspective is to posit an internal, mental representation regarding L2 linguistic competence, or *interlanguage* (Corder, 1967; Selinker, 1972), and to describe how changes in linguistic competence are achieved. Psycholinguistic research acknowledges social context as a potential variable, but only to the extent that factors arising from that context promote or hinder development of the learner's internal representations (see Gass, 1998; Kasper, 1997; Long, 1997).

In presenting fundamental features of the debate between sociocultural and psycholinguistic perspectives on SLA, I analyze McDermott's (1996) notion of *traits*, *interactional circumstances*, and *systems* as represented in the passage above and make connections between these concepts and arguments currently being made in the SLA literature. In the final section, I discuss findings from several studies that explore the ways in which the phenomenon of classroom SLA is shaped by the institutional and political contexts in which it is embedded (Gebhard, 1997, 1998; Harklau, 1994). In doing so, in line with a sociocultural position, I argue for a reconceptualization of classroom SLA as an institutional phenomenon shaped by cultures and structures at work in educational systems. Such a reconceptualization is important because studies of classroom SLA, even those grounded in social orientations, have tended to decontextualize classroom discourses as isolated islands of linguistic practice without exploring the ways in which larger institutional practices associated with schooling shape those discourses. Throughout the discussion, I address issues related to the implications of reconceptualizing classroom SLA for the activities of theory building and classroom teaching and learning.

## TRAITS

McDermott (1996), an educational anthropologist, problematizes the assumption that learners' characteristics or traits, such as attentiveness, memory, and problem-solving abilities, belong to individuals. Rather, he argues that within formal, institutional contexts, individual traits become static truths that are socially constructed by an educational system designed to discover, describe, and differentially educate children who manifest different rates and ways of learning. As a result, institutional labels such as *learning disabled* or, by extension, *limited English proficient*

(LEP) exist within the culture of schools as categories so powerful that they can “acquire” learners. In describing this phenomenon, McDermott writes that institutional labels “precede any child’s entry into the world and that these labels, well-established resting places in adult conversations, stand poised to take their share from each new generation” (p. 272). Stated another way, McDermott is suggesting that individual traits exist in large part outside as opposed to solely inside the head of the learner. In doing so, he does not claim that this makes the condition of being labeled learning disabled less real to the participants involved. Rather, his point is that a set of discourses associated with the practices of formal education stands ready to assign meaning to different rates and ways of learning that have implications for how children participate in school and in wider social structures.

To provide data, McDermott (1996) shares findings from an 18-month ethnographic study of Adam, an 8-year-old boy who was officially diagnosed as learning disabled (Hood, McDermott, & Cole, 1980). McDermott and his colleagues describe Adam as eager to try in school but as having trouble with isolated cognitive tasks given by the school’s reading specialist or on more contextually sensitive tests given by the research team. In looking for a fuller accounting of the problem, the research team gave up on trying to speculate on the internal workings of Adam’s cognitive functioning. Instead, they turned their attention to analyzing what happened around Adam in daily school practices that seem to “organize” and “display” his moments of being a “learning-disabled” (p. 273) person. In describing this phenomenon, McDermott writes,

On one occasion of his [Adam’s] looking inattentive, for example, it took Adam to look away at just the right time, but it took many others to construct the right time for Adam to look away; it took others to look away from his looking away, and still more to discover his looking away, to make something of it, to diagnose it, to document it, and to remediate it. Whatever was Adam’s problem inside his head, we had forced on us the recognition that Adam had plenty of problems all around him, in every person on the scene, in most every scene called educative. (p. 273)

Applied to a discussion of SLA studies, McDermott’s (1996) shift from a focus on the internal to an examination of the social aspects of learning parallels a paradigm shift in SLA studies from a psycholinguistic to a context-sensitive accounting of the processes involved in language acquisition. Firth and Wagner (1997), in capturing this debate, attack psycholinguistic explanations of language learning as too “individualistic” and “mentalistic” in their accounting of “the interactional and sociolinguistic dimensions” of language learning” (p. 285). In regard to the notion of learners’ traits specifically, Firth and Wagner, as well as others (Kramsch,

1997; Rampton, 1990), object to naturalized terms such as *native speaker* and *nonnative speaker* for several reasons. First, the binary distinction between native speaker and nonnative speaker has led researchers to posit L2 users as objects of study constructed vis-à-vis an imaginary monolingual, homogeneous L2 speech community. In the context of studies of ESL in particular, this imaginary, esteemed community appears to belong to an idealized U.S. or British citizen. Such a community, in fact, does not exist in the politically tidy ways that psycholinguistic studies of SLA suggest. Rather, most users of a language, particularly of world varieties of English, regardless of their proficiency level and regardless of whether they are using their first, second, or third language, are members of multiple, often hybrid discourse communities that construct multiple, hybrid identities that cannot be reduced to a set of predetermined traits (see, e.g., Peirce, 1995; Rampton, 1995; Valdman, 1992).

The response from psycholinguists regarding the concept of multiple identities in an accounting of the processes in SLA has been more or less favorable. Long (1997), for example, responds to Firth and Wagner's (1997) critique by agreeing that the distinction between native speakers and nonnative speakers in his own work and in that of others has ignored or underestimated "other separate or simultaneous speaker identities (father, friend, business partner, etc.) to which both parties may be giving expression when they talk" (p. 320). He adds, however, that the question is a matter about which more empirical evidence is needed, definitions of what counts as evidence aside.<sup>1</sup>

Second, Firth and Wagner (1997) argue that the distinction between native speaker and nonnative speaker has antecedents in Chomskian linguistics and notions of linguistic competence. Chomskyan linguistics, by definition, prioritizes the mind over society in constructing an understanding of the origin and structure of linguistic knowledge. As such, Firth and Wagner argue, much of the research in SLA has constructed the nonnative speaker as a *defective communicator* in ways that focus almost exclusively on grammatical competence. As evidence, Firth and Wagner critique studies of input modification and communicative strategies that they assert are built on form-focused, mentalistic constructs such as *interlanguage* (Corder, 1967; Selinker, 1972) and *fossilization* (Selinker, 1972). Firth and Wagner advise that such studies, by focusing on the presence or the absence of phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic aspects of language, construct meaning as located in the individual's mind and as transferable from brain to brain as opposed to "a social and negotiated product of interaction, transcending

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<sup>1</sup> For a debate regarding what counts as research in SLA, see the special issue of *Applied Linguistics* on theory construction (Vol. 14, No. 3, 1993) and Lantolf (1996).

individual intentions and behaviours" (p. 290; see also Lantolf, 1996; van Lier, in press).

In response, researchers working within a psycholinguistic paradigm (Kasper, 1997; Long, 1997; Poulisse, 1997) counter that the issues Firth and Wagner (1997) raise, though interesting, say little about how the process of language acquisition takes place, specifically how interaction, as defined by Firth and Wagner, translates into mental functioning. Kasper, in particular, maintains that any reconceptualization of SLA studies, regardless of the theoretical orientation of the researcher, must take into account "what the conditions and mechanisms of learning are" (p. 310). Hall (1997), in her response to Firth and Wagner's argument, explains those conditions and mechanisms, describing competence as arising from "assisted participation" (p. 302) through scaffolding, modeling, and training (see also Lantolf, in press).

## INTERACTION

McDermott (1996) asserts that, when assessing an individual's ability, it is "essential that we take into account the interactional circumstances that position people in the world" (p. 383). My interpretation of McDermott's notion of "interactional circumstances that position" individuals in the world relates to the above discussion of the ways in which interactions within multiple discourse communities construct the multiple identities of L2 users. In addition, McDermott's notion of interactional circumstances includes a broader understanding of the relationship between interaction and the context in which interaction takes place. Specifically, in his ethnography, McDermott analyzes the contexts in which Adam carries out a range of activities (e.g., remembering his phone number in casual conversation, making a cake in cooking class, taking a test in a formal test-taking situation). The focus of his analysis is the availability of resources in the completion of tasks. These resources take the form of sociolinguistic interactions as well as Adam's use of material objects. The research team found that contexts were not fixed as more or less cognitively demanding but were constructed by the participants in ways that made Adam's disability more or less of a problem and more or less visible to others. In analyzing the team's findings, McDermott writes, "Context is not something into which someone is put, but an order of behaviors of which one is a part" (p. 290). In this sense, he challenges naturalized assumptions regarding the notion of context that suggest that it is an "empty slot . . . the 'con' that contains the 'text,' the bowl that contains the soup" (p. 282). He adds that one of the unfortunate implications of the context-as-container metaphor is that this perspective views context as at the "borders of the

phenomenon under analysis" (p. 282) as opposed to an integral part of learning that shapes and is shaped by texts.

Applied to SLA studies, McDermott's (1996) discussion of the relationship between interaction and context, or text and context, suggests a more encompassing notion of context than is usually assumed in SLA research. Specifically, within SLA studies, the notion of context is often slimly understood as simply the setting where particular discourse patterns, such as the often cited initiation-response-feedback pattern, are assumed to prevail by default of being in a particular location, such as a classroom. Debates surrounding the superiority of natural settings versus classroom settings are an example of the degree to which the notion of context is often undertheorized as a physical location containing texts (for a discussion, see Ellis, 1994, p. 214).

A more theoretically developed understanding of the mediating role context plays in SLA comes from the work of Kramsch (1993). Drawing on Halliday's functional linguistics (Halliday & Hasan, 1989), Kramsch argues that text and context are two mutually constructing aspects of the same process of meaning construction. In this process, meaning resides not in the formal properties of language but in the interplay between text and the total environment in which it unfolds:

Context is shaped by persons in dialogue with one another, saying things about the world and thus making statements about themselves and their relationship to one another. Through this dialogue, they exchange and negotiate meanings that belong to a community's stock of common knowledge and that draw on a variety of past and present "texts." Context is the matrix created by language as discourse and as a form of social practice. Context should therefore be viewed not as a natural given but as a social construct. (p. 46; see Kramsch & McConnell-Ginet, 1992)

An even more encompassing understanding of the text-context relationship comes from sociological studies of discourse practices. First, using what one might call *microunits* of analysis, researchers (e.g., Goffman, 1963, 1981; see Giddens, 1984, for a review) have paid close attention to the ways in which participants in conversation use linguistic and nonverbal systems of communication, such as gestures and bodily postures, in an orchestrated way to coconstruct meaning. Other discourse analysts (e.g., Goodwin & Goodwin, 1998) have focused on the ways in which physical objects in the environment, such as a hopscotch grid on a school playground, impose structure on conversation and, in effect, act as an invisible but present interlocutor. In contrast, using what one might call *macrounits* of analysis, other social theorists (e.g., Foucault, 1979, in his discussion of panopticism; Giddens, 1984) suggest that the ways in which institutions such as hospitals, prisons, and schools

physically position people in space, in time, and in relation to one another shape the nature of the discursive practices in which people engage.

In regard to SLA studies, to my knowledge there have been no investigations of the ways in which the relationship between text and context, thus broadly defined, play a role in the processes of SLA. In other words, with the possible exception of studies of computer-assisted communication (e.g., Thorne, 1999a, 1999b), I do not know of any studies that have analyzed the ways in which gestures, physical objects, and the physical positioning of the L2 user in relation to others shape the processes involved in L2 learning. The response from researchers working within a psycholinguistic paradigm (Gass, 1998; Long, 1997), however, suggests that such a broad definition of context is beyond the scope of inquiry in SLA studies proper but is really the study of L2 use. Given the importance of interaction in the process of acquiring an L2, regardless of whether one adopts a psycholinguistic or sociocultural theoretical lens, use and acquisition are two faces of the same process; artificially pulling them apart therefore does not strike me as helpful. How one approaches context in one's research, however, is another question—the answer to which should be based on the questions one is asking and how one's theoretical perspective guides such an investigation. In this sense, I am suggesting not that one paradigm is more valid than another but rather that the value or quality of one's research lies in the degree to which the research questions, the theoretical framework, and the methods have internal logic and integrity.

In regard to researchers interested in questions related to the settings in which SLA takes place, particularly researchers interested in classroom settings, I suggest that a broader conception of the relationship between text and context has something to offer in working toward the condition of internal integrity. Namely, a broader understanding of context is a movement away from what Giddens (1984) calls "methodological individualism" (p. 214)—that is, a movement away from conducting research about social phenomena in which the units of analysis focus on the actions of individuals (such as an analysis of the interactions that take place between an L2 learner and his or her teacher) in the absence of a discussion of social structures that shape these interactions. An alternative to methods that individualize people as objects of study is to design studies with multiple units of analysis in order to create a multifocal approach for seeing mutually constituting dynamics between individual actors and the multiple contexts they inhabit within schools. Methods such as these would provide data for examining the notion that, when L2 learners communicate, at whatever level of effectiveness, it is neither sufficient nor necessary that they share the same grammar. What they must share, in the words of Hanks (1996), is "the ability to orient

themselves verbally, perceptually, and physically to each other and their social worlds" (p. 229; see also Goffman, 1981).

## SYSTEMS

When McDermott (1996) refers to language as "systematically unavailable to some" (p. 283), he is referring to the ways in which access to particular discourse practices associated with academic success is not free for the taking. Rather, the character of participant structures in classrooms (see, e.g., Philips, 1972) and organizational structures in schools (see, e.g., Oakes, 1986) give or deny students access to an apprenticeship to the discourses of academic success. Investigations of organizational structures, such as student tracking in U.S. schools, demonstrate that students in college-bound or honors versus general or remedial tracks have differential access to academically sanctioned forms of knowledge and institutional resources in the form of quality curricular materials and skilled teachers (see, e.g., Oakes, 1986, for a discussion of student tracking; see Finley, 1984, for a discussion of teacher tracking).

In regard to classroom studies of SLA, the concept that classroom contexts are embedded within and shaped by a larger school and social context has been relatively unexplored. Given the questions in which psycholinguists are interested, this is not surprising. On the other hand, sociocultural theorists, such as Hall (1997), maintain that a contextual theory of classroom SLA should move in the direction of specifying the conditions under which a language learner's involvement in various "constellations of communicative practices" (p. 304) takes place. An example of such a project is a study conducted by Harklau (1994), who analyzed the ways in which school tracking structures affected the language learning experiences of four ESOL students attending a U.S. high school. She found that so-called low-track classes were, on the whole, poor L2 learning environments. Specifically, low-track students had exposure to truncated, inauthentic reading material, had little practice in composing extended texts beyond the word or sentence level, and had few opportunities to participate orally in peer-directed learning activities. As a result, the texts they produced could be described as ungrammatical, awkward, and deficient. In commenting on these texts and the contexts in which they were produced, Harklau remarks that low-track classes "were distinguished as much by what they did not do as by what they did" (p. 225). Such a state of affairs recalls the work of literacy theorists such as Lankshear and Lawler (1987), who suggest that, just as there are discourse practices at work in schools that socially construct literacy, there are also discourse practices at work in schools that socially construct illiteracy.

In regard to theory building, the findings from Harklau's (1994) study



suggest several important directions for research in classroom SLA. First, given that the language forms used by ESOL students bear echoes of the contexts in which those forms were acquired, constructs in SLA such as fossilization can be reanalyzed as arising not from individual learners' frozen interlanguage but from their relatively frozen social position within schools and society as a whole. In the Vygotskian sense, such a reanalysis suggests that school structures, like all social structures, are mediating tools in the relation between language forms and social meanings. The language forms, in this sense, are the linguistic features of the texts L2 learners produce. The social meanings are the ways in which an evaluation of such texts leads to assumptions about L2 learners' intelligence, their ability to "do school," and their future social status. As such, an analysis of school structures suggests that institutional structures play a role in the distribution of discourses associated with academic success and school failure that parallel the division of social roles and the division of labor found in the sociopolitical context in which schools are embedded. Therefore, schools reflect and enact an understanding of how dominant ideologies define the nature of learning, the nature of language, and the status of L2 users in the society as a whole (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1989).

One investigation into the above set of assumptions comes from a large-scale, 3-year study of the meaning of school restructuring as experienced by L2 learners in the United States (Gebhard, 1997, 1998; Little & Dorph, 1999).<sup>2</sup> School restructuring does not have a single definition but involves a broad range of reforms related to student-grouping practices, modifications in curriculum and instruction, changes in approaches to teachers' professional development, improvements in assessment practices, and enhancements in school-community relationships (for a review, see Murphy, 1991; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). The qualitative study involved constructing case studies of three elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools in California that were awarded sizable restructuring grants from the state as part of a statewide school reform initiative. The case studies were organized around two units of analysis: an analysis of the individual school's restructuring efforts and an analysis of the school experiences of 63 focus students in Grades 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. Of these 63 students, 17 were institutionally designated as LEP based on a home language survey parents completed when they registered their children for school. The data sources used by the research team in constructing the nine case studies included field notes from observations of school life as experienced by the focus students; transcriptions from audiotaped, semi-

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<sup>2</sup> The SB 1274 School Restructuring Study was funded by the Stuart Foundation and the Hewlett Foundation and was conducted under the direction of Judith Warren Little.

structured interviews with students, parents, teachers, teacher's aides, and administrators; and relevant documents (e.g., students' work, students' academic records, curricular materials, and school reports). In addition, at the elementary school level, the database included transcriptions from audio- and videotaped interactions of focal students.

The findings from this study indicate that organizational structures affect the nature of the sociolinguistic interactions available to L2 learners in schools. Specifically, to varying degrees, eight of the nine schools profiled implemented structural changes that did little to address the marginal location and status of L2 learners. Rather, organizational structures tended to ghettoize L2 learners in classrooms where they had limited access to participation in discourse communities supportive of SLA, especially academically sanctioned ways of using texts. Rather, L2 learners were constructed as students with academic limitations in need of remediation as opposed to learners in need of access to linguistic and academic resources. In all but one elementary school, L2 learners confronted a combination of the following conditions:

1. isolating structures: The physical location of ESL and bilingual classrooms on school campuses, institutional structures related to student grouping practices, and participation structures within classrooms collectively isolated L2 learners in ways that limited their access to sociolinguistic resources (e.g., more proficient users of English, academic uses of print).
2. low expectations: L2 users tended to confront low expectations and low supports for the development of appropriate grade-level content knowledge and the acquisition of English in academically sanctioned ways.
3. weak institutional supports: L2 learners tended to confront a lack of collective responsibility for their linguistic and academic growth, weak commitments to the professional development of their teachers, and the absence of basic resources such as textbooks and other curricular materials in their classrooms.
4. construction of a lack of proficiency in English as a learning disability: Organizational discourses and classroom discourses tended to construct ESOL students not as language learners capable of academic achievement but as students with cognitive limitations. This trend was stronger in high schools and weaker but still prevalent in elementary schools.

The counterexample to this trend was evident in the experiences of a Hmong third grader named Pa Hua (a pseudonym), who attended an elementary school that implemented a bold restructuring initiative. This initiative provided L2 learners with access to the same curriculum as

other students in their classes; to support in developing literacy in their L1; to talented, experienced teachers who were familiar with SLA theory and methods; and to English-speaking peers.

## CONCLUSION

In the debate in the field of SLA between sociocultural and psycholinguistic perspectives of learning and language development, I align myself with a sociocultural perspective on SLA. However, I advocate a more encompassing, theoretically more developed understanding of the ways in which institutional contexts, teaching contexts, and learning contexts are mutually constituted through discursive practices. Elucidating this point are the findings from two studies (Gebhard, 1997; Harklau, 1994) designed to bridge disciplinary boundaries between applied linguistics and the sociology of schools as structured, cultural spaces. Collectively, a review of the theoretical literature, in conjunction with the findings from these studies, suggests the following points regarding reconceptualizing classroom SLA as an institutional phenomenon:

1. The origin and structure of L2 learners' sociolinguistic knowledge are rooted in the daily social and cultural practices in which they engage.
2. Individual characteristics of learners are not descriptors of their internal mental state in any static or politically neutral way. Rather, descriptors of L2 learners are socially constructed. The nature of this construction is a function of the ways in which discourse practices associated, in part, with formal education assign meaning to the sociolinguistic actions of L2 learners.
3. The context in which L2 learners interact includes the context created by successive turns at talk and uses of texts in classrooms. Context also includes the ways in which L2 users and their interlocutor draw on nonlinguistic semiotic systems related to gestures, bodily postures, and the use of material objects available to them. In addition, an analysis of context encompasses attention to the ways in which L2 users are physically positioned in relation to others in schools.
4. Schools are structured, cultural spaces that play a role in the distribution of discourse practices and the production and reproduction of social orders. Therefore, societal ideologies regarding the nature of learning, the nature of language, and the status of L2 users shape and are shaped by organizational structures that tend to provide students with differential access to participation in academically sanctioned discourse practices in classrooms.

My hope is that such a reconceptualized research agenda will allow researchers, policy makers, and practitioners to simultaneously see inside and outside classrooms in order to gain insights into the supports and constraints L2 students confront in learning an L2—in particular supports and constraints that are not rooted to individual strengths and shortcomings but to factors related to the institutional culture and structure of schools. Such insights have the potential to guide policy makers and practitioners in reforming the educational practices associated with L2 learners.

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## Putting Critical Pedagogy in Its Place: A Personal Account

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■ In this account, I offer a personal reflection on the role critical pedagogy has played in my own professional development. Although this role has been a profound and lasting one, I explain here why I personally have resisted embracing critical pedagogy unreservedly.

Since I first read Freire's (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Giroux's (1988) *Teachers as Intellectuals* and subsequently began to explore the literature of critical pedagogy, the ideas and practices this literature offers have had a profound effect on virtually every aspect of my teaching. At one level this influence has been general and has affected my whole approach to the teaching profession. More than anything else, perhaps, critical pedagogy offers a way of combining a trenchant critique of previously unquestioned practices in education with concrete ways of introducing change—that is, with a belief in the transformative power of the individual teacher.

It was critical pedagogy that helped me understand that all teaching methods are ideological in nature (Benesch, 1993; Pennycook, 1989) and that differential power relations and political interests are crucial in understanding the global spread of English teaching (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Tollefson, 1995). The exploration of these ideas forms

a vital element in the methods courses that I teach: Along with discussions of methods and techniques in teaching, my students and I consider the political dimensions of teaching in second and foreign language contexts and the implications of the globalization of English—as well as our own involvement in this process.

Also in this category is the acceptability of—indeed, the necessity for—a politically committed pedagogy. As a politically engaged individual, I had always found myself wondering about the extent to which my political beliefs belonged in the classroom. Through critical pedagogy I came to understand that a teacher must necessarily be a political creature and that, without proselytizing, it is possible to integrate one's personal political beliefs into one's pedagogy and, through teacher education, to encourage and enable other teachers to do the same.

Another, more local set of influences directly affects my day-to-day practice both as an ESL/EFL teacher and as a teacher educator: the ideological implications of English-only in the classroom, for instance (Auerbach, 1993), or the dialogical nature of teaching and learning (Freire, 1972), which in my case informs my whole approach to teacher education, including my use of dialogue journals, process writing, and negotiated syllabuses (Johnston, 1998). This influence has perhaps been all the more profound because, as Auerbach (1998) and others have pointed out, critical pedagogy does not in itself constitute a method; the microlevel pedagogical implications of a critical stance often have to be worked through by the individual teacher, as was the case with my exploration of dialogue in my own classroom (Johnston, in press-b).

The influence of critical pedagogy, then, has been central in my development as a teacher and teacher educator. At the same time, however, I have been troubled by often only semirealized doubts about this approach, doubts that have prevented me from labeling what I do as *critical pedagogy* and from identifying myself as a *critical pedagogist*. My principal purpose in writing this account is to work through some of my objections and reservations regarding critical pedagogy. I hope here to tread a fine line between personal beliefs and the TESOL field's shared discourse on language teaching and learning—that is, between what Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) call *voice* and *vision*.

## LIMITATIONS AND RESERVATIONS

Critical approaches to critical pedagogy are not new. Ellsworth (1989) objected to critical pedagogy on its own terms: She claimed that it is inherently undemocratic and not at all liberating, as it claims to be. Her seminal and much-cited critique of the *oppressive myths* of critical pedagogy was followed by numerous other less-than-favorable analyses. Gore (1992, 1993), for example, accuses critical pedagogists of a lack of

reflexivity, that is, an inability to take critical purchase on their own work: "In his insistence that teachers are intellectuals who need to be conscious of the contradictory efforts of their work, it seems Giroux has ignored the possibility that his own position as an intellectual is also vulnerable as a 'regime of truth'" (1992, p. 62). Gore also objects to the way that critical pedagogy's "claims to empowerment attribute extraordinary abilities to the teacher" (p. 57), a point echoed by Janangelo (1993) in his critique of the unreasonable expectations critical pedagogy places on teachers. The passivity on the part of students implicit in this view and the one-way relationship it suggests have in turn been attacked by Lather (1992), who points out that "too often, such pedagogies have failed to probe the degree to which 'empowerment' becomes something done 'by' liberated pedagogists 'to' or 'for' the as-yet-unliberated" (p. 122). As a feminist, Lather also excoriates critical pedagogy as "largely male inscribed" and "a site men have constructed to serve themselves" (p. 129). Lastly, Usher and Edwards (1994) raise a number of objections to critical pedagogy, including its "curious silence on concrete educational practices" (p. 218), that is, its failure to make explicit connections between its abstract philosophical position and what does or should go on in actual classroom teaching.

These analyses have helped me pinpoint some aspects of my own resistance to critical pedagogy. Yet when I analyze this resistance, my reservations turn out to be somewhat different. I find that my principal objections reside at the level of what Whitehead (1993) calls *living educational theory*—that is, the set of values and beliefs that are a combination of ideas and practice and that have arisen more or less organically at the meeting point of my professional and intellectual development. It is at this level that I will address critical pedagogy: That is, I see critical pedagogy as representing a *living contradiction* (Whitehead, 1993) in my own work, and in this account I explore and perhaps to some extent resolve that contradiction. I focus on four aspects of critical pedagogy that are of concern to me: (a) the nature of power in classrooms, (b) the view of education as primarily political in nature, (c) the positioning of critical pedagogy with relation to the postmodern, and (d) the language used by critical pedagogists.

## The Nature of Power in Classrooms

A great deal of work in critical pedagogy has focused on the disempowered status of learners and has explored ways in which teachers can empower their students (Kreisberg, 1992; Shor, 1996). Indeed, the word *empowerment* has become something of a shibboleth amongst critical pedagogists. However, both my own experience working primarily with adults of many different backgrounds in various national contexts and



the empirical educational research literature I have read suggest strongly that unequal power relations are a permanent feature of educational settings. Most convincing for me has been the work of Gore (e.g., 1998), who has conducted fine-grained analyses of power relations in various educational sites, including those where a so-called radical approach such as critical pedagogy is taken. Gore has based her analysis on a theoretical framework drawn from Foucault's (1977, 1980) conception of power. She has convincingly demonstrated the operation of power relations in all sites, including the supposedly radical ones. Her conclusion is that "no site was free of power relations and no site 'escaped' the use of techniques of power" (p. 245).

This conclusion strongly suggests real limits on the possibilities for empowerment in the classroom. My own belief is that, although students can be more or less empowered—for example, they can be given more responsibility for their own learning, they can take part in the design of their own courses, and they can be given more meaningful and less competitive assignments—teachers still retain authority in the classroom (Oyler, 1996). I concur with Gore's (1998) conclusion that it is more interesting and useful to work on putting this power to good use than to imagine it can be removed (pp. 247–249).<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, part of the problem here seems to be an overly simplistic understanding of the nature of power itself. As Gore (1992) points out in her earlier work, critical pedagogists "conceive of power as property, something the teacher has and can give to the students" (p. 57). She argues for a more complex, Foucaultian conception of power as "something that circulates" (p. 58) and thus can be exercised by students as well as teachers, a point reinforced by Usher and Edwards (1994, p. 219). This, too, accords with my own experience, in which power is not shared like a commodity so much as negotiated as a process.

### The View of Education as Primarily Political

My central objection to critical pedagogy, however, is not that it is in itself mistaken but that it fails to capture the heart of what teaching is all about. Critical pedagogy is "fundamentally concerned with the centrality of politics and power in our understanding of how schools work" (McLaren, 1989, p. 159). As I made clear above, I agree wholeheartedly with the claim that schooling is political in nature, and I believe that it is

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<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, Freire himself believed that teacher authority was a constant:

For me the question is not for the teacher to have less and less authority. The issue is that the democratic teacher never, never transforms authority into authoritarianism. *He or she can never stop being an authority or having authority* [italics added]. Without authority it is very difficult for the liberties of students to be shaped. (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 91, cited in Oyler, 1996, p. 25)

crucial to understand the workings of power in educational systems and contexts. However, I also believe very firmly that in essence teaching is not primarily about power or politics. My own view is that fundamentally teaching is about the moral relation between teacher and students; that is, the essence of teaching is moral, not political, in nature (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993; Johnston, Juhász, Marken, & Ruiz, 1998; Noblit & Dempsey, 1993; Noddings, 1984). I believe that although questions of power and culture and their attendant classifications (gender, race, sexual orientation) are of vital importance in understanding the processes of education, these can only be properly understood through the lens of moral interaction—that is, of the juxtaposition of values. What distinguishes humans and their social interactions are not primarily economic or political relations but the questions of good and bad, right or wrong, which, though they include matters of power, can never be reduced to these alone. As Noddings (1984) says, the moral relation is “ontologically basic” (p. 3). It is my belief that critical pedagogy, though it frequently acknowledges the moral and ethical dimension of teaching, fails to perceive its centrality in the educational enterprise, instead, as the above quotation of McLaren (1989) demonstrates, placing political relations at the center of teaching and learning. Such a position, in my view, falsifies the essential nature of education.

### The Positioning of Critical Pedagogy With Relation to the Postmodern

My third objection is more philosophical, though it also has very tangible real-world implications. Many critical pedagogists embrace the term *postmodern* and indeed claim that critical pedagogy is an inherently postmodern enterprise (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1990). It is my view, however, that this claim is based on a partial and faulted (or perhaps misleadingly selective) understanding of what is meant by the postmodern condition and that many aspects of postmodern analysis in fact present philosophical problems for critical pedagogy. A central confusion is the failure to distinguish between postmodernism and postmodernity (Johnston, in press-a; Lyon, 1994): that is, between postmodern as critique and postmodern as description (Brock, 1997, p. 5). Critical pedagogists (e.g., Cherryholmes, 1988) have favored the former in its celebration of difference, its challenging of hegemonies, and its quest for alternative forms of expression.

The latter, however—postmodernity, or the description of a social condition—poses a challenge. A postmodern reading of society sees fragmentation and a descent into relativism of all kinds (political and social as well as cultural). Above all, it rejects the possibility of true progress: Jameson (1991), for example, describes postmodern architecture

as comprising “a random cannibalization of all the styles of the past” (p. 18), and similar trends can be identified in domains such as education. This reading lies utterly counter to the goals of critical pedagogy, which, contrary to the opinion of Kanpol (1994) and others, are irrevocably grounded in a teleological vision of history-as-(potential at least)-progress, which in turn is rooted in modernism (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 218). One cannot have the modernist cake of social progress and eat it with a postmodern fork.

My own research into the lives of EFL and ESL teachers (e.g., Johnston, in press-a) and the personal stories of colleagues in many countries have led me to believe that this profession is quintessentially postmodern in nature (in the second sense outlined above). At least as it stands at present, it is an occupation in which careers develop sideways and there is a lack of a “grand narrative” of the ESL/EFL teacher’s career; in which transnational encounters occur and transnational identities develop with a lack of teleological logic; and in which methodological change for change’s sake is the name of the game (witness the never-ending torrent of “the latest” textbooks). Under such conditions—those of postmodernity as description—it becomes particularly hard to believe in the rationalist account of progress touted by and for critical pedagogy.<sup>2</sup>

### The Language Used by Critical Pedagogists

My last objection to the field of critical pedagogy concerns not its substantive ideas so much as the forms in which its proponents choose to express them. Gore (1992, 1993) has analyzed the discourse of critical pedagogy as a *regime of truth*, in the process, as mentioned above, pointing out the lack of reflexivity it displays. My own objections here are more personal and direct. Quite simply, I find myself put off by the language used by critical pedagogists. To use their own terminology, I find myself excluded. This point in itself is not a new: Many writers in the field have felt the need to defend their use of a specialized, academic-sounding discourse (e.g., Kanpol, 1994; Macedo, 1994). Kanpol, for example, claims that it would be patronizing to avoid such language when writing for teachers.

However, as a consumer of these writings I remain unconvinced. It seems to me that a distinction can be drawn between a patronizing use of language and obscurantism and that writing plainly and clearly is not the same as writing down to one’s audience. Furthermore, whereas writers

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, I believe postmodernity presents other problems that critical pedagogy has not properly addressed, such as the centrality of consumption and the commodification of culture; these phenomena, and their relation to the claims of critical pedagogy and to the practice of ESL/EFL, deserve separate treatment elsewhere.

such as Macedo (1994) claim that ordinary teachers understand the writings of critical pedagogists, citing examples, I can also produce examples of my own of teachers who find the same writings exclusionary and off-putting—though not necessarily difficult.

Obscurantism, however—Giroux's (1988) "new discourse" (p. 3)—is only part of the problem. It seems to me that critical pedagogists have also commandeered a certain political vocabulary that gives them claim to the moral high ground. They borrow extensively from the language of proletarian protest, talking frequently of *struggle*, *emancipation*, and *liberation*. Their favorite adjectives are *revolutionary* and *radical*. Their metaphoric use of such terms seems intended to make readers feel like romantic rebels.

I object to such language, and not because I am anti-working class or anti-Marxist (in fact, unlike many critical pedagogists, I can claim both to have working-class origins and to have lived for 6 years under a real-life *soi-disant* Marxist system, in Poland). I object because in academic and educational circles in the United States it is mere posturing. I personally do not feel the need to dress up what I do in pseudorevolutionary bluster. There is something more than faintly absurd about the phrase *tenured radical* (Nelson, 1997), and I do not wish to be associated with those who label themselves thus, even if it is partly in jest. In addition, I agree with Janangelo (1993), who argues that this hyperbolic use of language and the "tropes of martyrdom and selflessness" (p. 149) that form part of it are in fact dangerous for the well-being of teachers themselves.

In sum, I feel that critical pedagogy would do well to exercise moderation in its use of language. There will be no revolution—at least not one led by university professors; and I believe critical pedagogy would find a broader hearing if it did not require its adherents to dress themselves up linguistically as Che Guevara. In this case, it seems as if the medium is at odds with the message.

## A PLACE FOR CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

I conclude, first, by reiterating what I said at the beginning of this account: Critical pedagogy has been and will continue to be a major influence on my teaching practice and my teaching philosophy. The objections I have expressed here by and large address critical pedagogy's ambitions (or perhaps pretensions) rather than its substantive contribution to educational thinking and practice. Above all, I see critical pedagogy as offering a way of conceptualizing the crucial question of power in classrooms and educational systems at both a local and a systemic level and of offering a philosophical justification for a politically committed pedagogy.

Yet I believe that, in essence, people are not definable as political creatures alone, just as they are not definable as individual agents alone. Critical pedagogy has given me insights into and understandings of the educational process that I would not otherwise have had, but its true contribution can be grasped only when it is seen as part of a bigger picture. The political dimension of teaching is crucial, but it is not enough to capture the complex essence of teaching, especially of ESL/EFL teaching in the postmodern world.

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# Possibilities for Feminism in ESL Education and Research

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■ How can feminism have an impact on a predominantly positivist field like TESL/applied linguistics? How do feminist education and research relate to other epistemologies? How can feminist features be applied to ESL research? This report seeks to answer these questions by summarizing a graduate school initiation to feminism by way of courses and an English for specific purposes (ESP) curriculum evaluation completed as part of a thesis. The curriculum (Cooke & Mackie, 1993) was developed for a 1-year certificate program for ESL students consisting of the ESP class, business courses taken with English L1 students, and a work placement period. In this report, I discuss (a) the feminist education I experienced and (b) feminist research both in general and in terms of the processes and outcomes of the curriculum evaluation.

## FEMINIST INTRODUCTION

My feminist education began while I was attending two graduate courses, a TESL course and a curriculum theory course, taught by female professors interested in feminism. Until this rare opportunity, my mainly positivist TESL education at three universities had taught me that the only identity of value was that of an objective, distanced researcher in pursuit of universal theory and that ESL teaching should follow one or more preferred theoretical orientations. Feminist-oriented courses raised my consciousness of the hierarchical relationships between theory and practice in ESL, between teachers and students, and between writing as a researcher and writing as a woman. I later applied this new consciousness to the curriculum evaluation.

This perspective taken by the professors of the two courses differed from that of other courses I had taken. Having professors state their interest in feminism at the outset of the course, or even during a course, was a first for me. Their classes embodied Schniedewind's (1983) guidelines for feminist teaching methodology: develop an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and community; share leadership; institute cooperative structures; integrate cognitive and affective learning; and take action. The approximately 37 female and 3 male students divided between the two courses were at the center of the curricula. In discussions of theoretical or research articles, the professors encouraged and valued the stories we related about our own language teaching and

learning experiences and about curriculum construction. Because our experiences were central, we connected personally and critically to the interests of the theorists. In writing assignments, we were given choices and were asked to write from a personal perspective. For example, for an assignment in one class, we could choose to write collaboratively, and in the same class we were asked to write a paper in any genre (e.g., letter, journal, biography) describing our personal theory of second language acquisition based on our experience as L2 learners and teachers. In the other class, we examined either a curriculum we had written or one developed by another writer and were asked to make connections between the curriculum and ourselves as teachers and learners. The reading lists for the two graduate courses also differed from those for nonfeminist classes, as they contained more qualitative research and papers locating various epistemological perspectives. Among the articles, two—by Aoki (1986) and by Pennycook (1989)—stand out as particularly raising our consciousness of the hegemony in scholarship and education.

The various invitations to connect our experience to the readings created an atmosphere in class unlike others I had experienced. Though the class was not devoid of the competitive energy found in graduate school, our disclosures created a spirit of sharing and cooperation, in contrast to Morgan's (1981) description of "academic machismo" (p. 101) and Taubman's (1982) summary of Collins' (1974) and Rich's (1975) characteristics of the patriarchal structure of schooling: "objective, linear, logical, dissecting, abstract, unemotional, expedient, aggressive, hierarchical, exclusive and goal directed . . . defensive-offensive orientation, combative, status oriented, dualistic, fragmented and depersonalized . . . and a split between personal and public worlds" (cited in Taubman, pp. 14–15). Our experiences, which we discussed in pairs and small groups, began to drive the dynamics, content, and direction of the classes, resulting in changes in the assignments and readings. The relationship between the students and the professors, therefore, was also different from that found in classes I had taken previously. The professors respected our practice, which was a very powerful experience for me.

I am suggesting here neither that only females can create this kind of learning environment nor that all females essentially invite students to relate their experiences and accept those experiences more than their male counterparts do. Rather, in these classes the professors were interested in and practised ways of learning that were new to me, and they seemed to value sources of knowledge that were transforming. When the courses had ended and I was preparing for the curriculum evaluation, I had a strong desire to incorporate the feminist features of my recent education into the curriculum evaluation: to equalize the



relationship between the participants and myself, center their experience with the curriculum by inviting them to express it, and personalize the study.

## INCORPORATING FEMINIST FEATURES INTO EVALUATION RESEARCH

### Themes of Feminist Research

Several principles or themes distinguish feminist from positivist approaches to research. The following summary draws on the work of Cook and Fonow (1990), Lather (1988), and Weiler (1988).

One main theme of feminist research is attention to the gender, race, and class of the research participants, including the researcher. This theme is realized, for example, by recognizing participants' lived experience, by not accepting research that views White, middle-class males as normative, and by revealing and articulating participants' public and personal realities. Feminist research addresses a related theme, consciousness-raising and transformation of gender, race, and class issues, by using certain topics or methods in the research process in an effort to make the research usable by participants, attend to political issues, and change the existing order of gender, class, and race inequities.

Another feature of feminist research is the diminishing or rejection of the positivist subject-object distinction in the research design. Rather, feminist research values a design that equalizes or reverses the hierarchy of the researcher and the researched and that is critical of quantification and objectification.

Finally, a feminist researcher would expect to find and accept contradictory data. Discussing her desire for a reinvention of science, Haraway (1991) claims that "all components of the desire are paradoxical and dangerous, and their combinations both contradictory and necessary" (p. 187). Lewis (1993), writing about education, agrees: "The fact that experience is the substance of theory has particular meanings for women. Much of what we experience of the world is the dichotomous and contradictory realities" (p. 10).

The features discussed here, however, should not be taken as characteristic of all feminist research, for, as Cook and Fonow (1990) point out, "there is no 'correct' feminist methodology" (p. 72). Lather (1988) acknowledges that feminist researchers might work within a positivist paradigm "in order to add to the body of cumulative knowledge that will eventually help to eliminate sex-based inequality" (p. 571). For example, at times quantitative descriptions may be a more powerful means of convincing an audience of the need for a particular program.

## Feminist Themes in the Curriculum Evaluation

In conducting the evaluation of the curriculum I developed, my main curiosity was investigating the lived experience of a document I had cowritten but was not teaching. The framework for the study both reflected the awareness gained from the two graduate courses described above and encompassed certain of the above themes, namely, (a) that consciousness-raising can be transforming, (b) that research can recognize participants' dual reality, and (c) that experience is a legitimate source of data. These themes were articulated through a participatory evaluation model in which the evaluator and the other participants plan and carry out the evaluation together (Alderson & Scott, 1992; Kirkup, 1986). Under this model, participants take part in any or all aspects of the evaluation, from making decisions, to tallying data, to writing reports.

I invited 15 individuals to participate in the curriculum evaluation: the 11 students and the teacher from the ESP class, 2 business teachers, and an international education advisor. All agreed except for 1 business teacher. Data were collected over a 5-month period.

*Consciousness-raising can be transforming.* I understand consciousness-raising as self-awareness in relation to the hegemonic social structure and to others. In research, it can take place when researchers acknowledge their involvement in the study. Rather than remaining separate from the object of investigation, they become part of what is researched, thereby breaking down the separation between subject and object. By contrast, positivist research in ESL, with its hierarchical and linear modes of organization, distances the researcher from the other research participants, is predominantly quantitative, and is unrepresentative of everyday classroom and institutional experiences. Like Clarke (1994), I saw a dysfunction in the "examination of curricula, methods, or materials in which these are discussed as if they existed independently of their use by teachers [which] reveals positivist assumptions of objectivity in which teachers are cast as subordinate" (p. 10). My positivist ESL education, however, was at odds with my desire to embrace the duality of the research. The tension would be resolved by questioning and feminist reading.

The bottom-up model of evaluation provided for the consciousness-raising of the participants. They chose the type and extent of their participation, deciding when and how long we would meet. They decided to evaluate the curriculum through questionnaires and small-group and class discussions, critiqued and changed the questionnaires and discussion questions, and read and commented on the final recommendations. I revised the instruments, recommendations, and report

based on their comments. For example, a female ESL business student was directly critical of class discussions in a business class in which she found little space for herself: "It was a good idea to have group participating in class. But do you know the result of this? The result's always the same person give his ideas and the same person always talk in class" (Mackie, 1994, p. 84).

*Research can recognize participants' dual reality.* According to feminist theory, dual reality combines "two separate consciousnesses: one emerging out of [women's] practical activities in the everyday world and one inherited from the dominant traditions of thought" (Anderson, Armitage, Jack, & Wittner, 1990, p. 97). Although positivist researchers may not acknowledge dual realities in their research, feminist researchers "are continually forced to confront their own double consciousness in the process of conducting research" (Cook & Fonow, 1990, p. 88). They have a "passionate desire" (Christ, 1987, p. 55) to complete the research picture by including the everyday, personal side of their reality.

In the evaluation project, I attended to the duality in the students' lives—for example, international/student, immigrant/Canadian, female/student, White/male—and in my roles as woman and researcher. In the thesis (Mackie, 1994), this attention to dualities took the form of alternative types of data (narration and poetry) integrated with more traditional ones (tables and discussion).

I believe that, by empowering the participants as it did, the role reversal provided by the participatory model of evaluation established an atmosphere that supported the participants in discussing issues of power within their understanding of the curriculum environment. The participants became more aware of their relative power. For instance, some students voiced an awareness of their lack of status. One immigrant student commented on his resistance to the distinction between his situation and that of international students: "It was hard to get into this program. They don't offer to landed immigrant. They just offering to international students. I felt it's not fair that just offer to international students" (Mackie, 1994, p. 76). He critiqued a two-tiered system in which low-fee-paying immigrant students received no special support whereas high-fee-paying international students enjoyed easy access to a host of services and programs.

Another student expressed an awareness of his dual identity as a student and workplace trainee:

First day, I was nervous before going to work but once I arrived at the store, the manager introduced me to everybody and then trained me and treated me the same way he treated the other workers. And I really felt great because sometimes people treated me a different way as a student. (Mackie, 1994, p. □107)

Noting his multiple realities as an ESL learner, student, and worker, this student recognized that he “felt great” because of equal treatment at work.

Comments like these underscored an important point. The students experienced the curriculum as much more than a series of interactional tasks through which they learned ESL and business content or simply as a paper document that was shown at the start of the evaluation and detailed in a questionnaire. From their viewpoint, the curriculum included people, institutional offices and processes, the work placement site and colleagues there, teaching practices, and their own multiple roles and status relative to one another. Students began to articulate and address their location in the hierarchy. By attending to these kinds of comments, I was able to recommend changes in the program. Later, the students edited the changes, and the teachers and administration acted on them.

*Experience is a legitimate source of data.* Because I had seen the positive value of recognizing and sharing experience as a source of learning in the feminist-oriented courses, I attended to the student participants’ experiences with the new curriculum. These participants were studying for the first time with English-speaking students and took part in a work placement. Many of the narrative data arising from these situations were paradoxical.

A case in point is ESL learners studying with native English speakers for the first time. Although some students felt frustrated and overwhelmed by the new language and the demands of interacting with English speakers, other students did not. Comments ranged from “I feel frustrated” to “[it] has been very getting lots of pressure on me” to “it doesn’t do anything” to “it’s very good” (Mackie, 1994, pp. 102–104). Like Lewis (1993), I believed that omitting data, however contradictory, emotional, or minor, would result in an incomplete representation of the participants’ views on the curriculum. The paradoxes were a reminder of the limitations on uncovering and reporting on a single truth from the participants’ experience. Indeed, I was not searching for a universal truth but was trying to understand how the class fit into my world and that of others. I therefore included the disparate points of view and types of data in my report and related them thematically.

## CONCLUSION

Feminist and other types of critical teaching and research provide a needed balance to TESL and applied linguistics. By valuing teachers’ and learners’ everyday experience, recognizing their various roles, and allowing for diverse responses in ESL and TESL classes and research, we

as TESOL professionals create space for a multiplicity of viewpoints and the potential for change within ourselves and our communities.

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## Thinking Critically, Thinking Dialogically

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■ A group of articles published between 1995 and 1997 argues against the inclusion of critical thinking<sup>1</sup> in the curricula of L2 composition courses offered at U.S. postsecondary institutions (Atkinson, 1997; Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996a, 1996b). Although these publications have already generated debate (Gieve, 1998; Raimes & Zamel, 1997; Spack, 1997; Zamel, 1997), the political implications of excluding critical thinking while recommending uncritical teaching of discipline-specific skills and genres have not been explored. Nor has the charge that teaching critical thinking “impos[es] on all students one way of ordering or making sense of the world” (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996b, p. 230), a contradiction to the claim—also appearing in this literature—that critical teaching cannot be taught.

In this article, after examining the major claims and political implications of the literature opposing critical thinking, I summarize some of the published responses. Especially relevant to this article's ideological concerns is Gieve's (1998) presentation of the differences between monologic critical thinking (informal logic) and dialogic critical thinking (social awareness/dissent), making crucial distinctions where Atkinson (1997), Atkinson and Ramanathan (1995), and Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996a, 1996b) have blurred lines. Moving from theory to practice, I then examine part of a classroom discussion of the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay U.S. college student. This example shows that dialogic critical thinking—expanding students' understanding beyond what they may have already considered to promote tolerance and social justice—can and should be taught.

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<sup>1</sup> Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996b) describe teaching critical thinking as “1) developing students' sense of informal logic toward strengthening their reasoning strategies; 2) developing and refining problem-solving skills; 3) developing the ability to look for hidden assumptions and fallacies in arguments” (p. 226). Atkinson (1997) reviews the literature on critical thinking and concludes that it is a “social practice” (p. 73) characteristic of U.S. middle-class thinking.

## NOT TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING: A POLITICAL CHOICE

Atkinson (1997), Atkinson and Ramanathan (1995), and Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996a, 1996b) share the view that critical thinking is acquired through an unconscious process of socialization during childhood and that it cannot, therefore, be taught in schools, especially at the postsecondary level. They also believe that native-English-speaking students enrolled in U.S. colleges have been socialized as critical thinkers whereas their nonnative-speaking counterparts enrolled in those institutions may not have been. So, according to these authors, nonnative-speaking students should not be asked to engage in critical reading and writing tasks because “L1 students are better prepared to handle them than L2 students” (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996b, p. 231). The argument that critical thinking is harder for L2 students than for L1 students, if not impossible for the former group, appears frequently in these authors’ writing:

L2 student-writers, given their respective sociocultural and linguistic socialization practices, are more likely than native English speaking (NES students) to encounter difficulty when being inducted into CT [critical thinking] courses in freshman composition classes; they are not “ready” for CT courses in either L1 and L2 writing classrooms. (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996b, p. 232)

Teaching strategies adopted in the [first-year L1] composition program tend to assume a set of cultural norms that many NNS do not necessarily possess. This partially explains the difficulty that many ESL students encounter in their transition from L2 to L1 programs. (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996a, p. 23)

Perhaps the major problem with introducing such non-overt social practices [critical thinking skills] into the classroom is that they are hard—if not impossible—to teach. (Atkinson, 1997, p. 77)

However, while claiming that nonnative-speaking students are disadvantaged by their putative lack of socialization in critical thinking, Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996b) also worry about students’ vulnerability to teachers’ imposition of critical thinking. That is, they believe, on the one hand, that critical thinking is difficult or impossible to teach and, on the other, that it is too easy. Nonnative-speaking students are portrayed, at once, as deterred by their cultural backgrounds from thinking critically and susceptible to its influence in U.S. university classes.

This contradiction is due in part to the belief that some types of teaching impose a particular way of thinking on students whereas others do not. Yet the imposition of discipline-specific skills and genres is no less ideological than critical thinking or any way of teaching with its choice of

topics, approach to inquiry, and so on. So, rather than seeking ways to avoid imposing, those who oppose teaching critical thinking might ask, How is my teaching driven by my ideology? Instead, by not acknowledging that their choice to reject critical thinking is as political as deciding to be a critical teacher, the authors can tacitly claim neutrality for their position.

Although the opponents of critical thinking do not discuss their choices from an ideological viewpoint, Atkinson (1998) outlines a clear political position. In a response to his critics, Atkinson states his belief that for humans to become aware of how they think would lead to “disastrous consequences; mundane life can proceed only when its vast tacit machinery remains by and large under wraps” (p. 133). In taking this position, Atkinson excludes students from examining their thinking and behavior and possibly challenging the status quo. Critical teachers take an opposing political position, encouraging students to consider and question processes of daily life so that their thinking and behavior will be informed.

## DISTINGUISHING MONOLOGIC AND DIALOGIC CRITICAL THINKING

The literature opposing critical thinking has been challenged on methodological and theoretical grounds. Raimes and Zamel (1997) wonder how Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996a) selected and analyzed the 10 college composition textbooks for their study and why they recommend discipline-based freshman composition for nonnative-speaking students solely on the basis of an examination of textbooks rather than on evidence of the benefits of such an approach. In addition, Raimes and Zamel question the claim that L1 students have an easier time in freshman composition classes than L2 students do, finding that both groups are essentialized by this unsupported conclusion.

Zamel (1997) takes the concern about students further. Though not denying that there may be conflicts between students’ prior experience and the target culture, she points to what is left out when a deterministic stance toward language and culture is adopted. What about the role of race, class, and gender in identity formation? she asks. Why not examine the complicated, and often positive, relationships between students’ home and target cultures rather than deciding a priori what is possible? And what about basing conclusions on actual data, such as students’ talk and writing, rather than on notions of students’ limitations?

Whereas Zamel (1997) challenges the reductive portrayal of nonnative-speaking students, Gieve’s (1998) concerns are with Atkinson’s (1998) characterization of critical thinking, agreeing that it is a social practice but disagreeing that it is unconscious. Instead, critical thinking is



“reflective social practice” (Gieve, 1998, p. 124), questioning and perhaps changing conventional attitudes and practices rather than unwittingly accepting the status quo. Along with positing consciousness as central to critical thinking, Gieve also counters Atkinson’s claim that critical thinking is a uniquely Western or U.S. middle-class phenomenon, by distinguishing monologic and dialogic critical thinking. Monologic critical thinking, on which U.S. skills-based school curricula are often based, is “defined by the informal logic movement” (p. 126). Dialogic critical thinking, on the other hand, is “a form of dialogical discourse in which the taken-for-granted assumptions and presuppositions that lie behind argumentation are uncovered, examined, and debated” (p. 125); Gieve adds that this type of thinking is a powerful tool for dissent across cultures and classes, not just in the West or among the middle class. Note that Gieve’s description of dialogic critical thinking suggests the third part of Ramanathan and Kaplan’s (1996b) definition of critical thinking: “Developing the ability to look for hidden assumptions and fallacies in everyday arguments” (p. 226). Left out of their definition, though, is the dialogic exchange Gieve promotes: examining and debating assumptions. That is, dialogic critical thinking includes a thorough study and consideration of various viewpoints. The opponents of critical thinking overlook these features, portraying it instead as a monologic transmission of Western ways of thinking to impressionable students. Yet, as Spack (1997) points out, students are not simply products of their home cultures and passive recipients of the target culture; “they are also creators of culture” (p. 772). That is, student agency is part of the L2 teaching and learning equation, as can be seen in the following example of a classroom discussion among actively engaged students.

## AN EXAMPLE OF DIALOGIC CRITICAL THINKING

Teaching critical thinking dialogically allows students to articulate their unstated assumptions and consider a variety of views. However, the goal is not just to exchange ideas but also to promote tolerance and social justice, as the following description of part of a classroom conversation shows. The discussion took place midsemester in an English for academic purposes (EAP) reading class linked to an EAP writing class and an introductory social sciences course. I chose to introduce the murder of Matthew Shepard<sup>2</sup> for a variety of reasons. First,

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew Shepard was an openly gay 22-year-old student enrolled at the University of Wyoming, Laramie. On October 7, 1998, he went to a bar frequented by gay and straight students and workers. Two young local men, Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney, posing as homosexuals, offered Shepard a ride. They drove him to an isolated rural area, tied him to a fence, and beat, burned, and robbed him. Shepard was discovered 18 hours later, still tied up. He died 5 days later.

from an ideological viewpoint, I am committed to fighting injustice and inequality in society and the classroom. Therefore, when this hate crime was reported, I felt compelled to raise it with my students.

Second, there had been an on-line, universitywide discussion about how to respond to the murder. Gay faculty stressed the importance of “coming out” to students, mainly to create a safe climate for gay students who may have been terrified by the brutal crime. Others offered testimonials about the tolerant attitudes expressed by their students. And one writing teacher wondered how to respond to blatantly homophobic statements made by young men in her class in connection to the murder. Missing were suggestions about how to go beyond initial reactions to encourage sustained conversation in which a greater range and depth of positions could be explored, a goal I hoped to achieve.

Third, a few young men in my class had previously mentioned using physical violence when confronted about their race or ethnicity. Therefore, I suspected they might find violence an acceptable way of dealing with homosexuality and was prepared to help them question that response. Finally, I did not assume that all of my students were necessarily heterosexual and wanted to create a climate of acceptance so that issues related to sexual orientation could be addressed.

Rather than summarize the entire discussion, I focus on one assumption that emerged and was treated dialogically: that heterosexual men are justified in responding to the presence of homosexual men with anger or violence to assert a traditional notion of masculinity. This assumption was initially unstated but was gradually articulated as the discussion progressed, beginning with Joon’s<sup>3</sup> dismissal of the topic when I distributed a newspaper article about the murder: “That homo guy!” As the students read it silently, he continued, muttering, “I hate that . . . . Gay people . . . I’m gonna kill myself!” After discussing the disputed facts of the Shepard murder, including whether Shepard had approached his attackers at the bar or whether they had initiated conversation with him, Roger told of once being approached by a gay coworker: “I wanted to punch him, but I had to keep my job.” Then Eva told of being approached by a gay woman at a dance club, allowing the students to consider why Roger had felt threatened whereas Eva had not. Why had he wanted to beat the guy up whereas she had laughed it off and even felt flattered? Joon declared that if he were approached by a man, he would beat him up. When asked why, he said that being admired by a man would embarrass him, an important admission that led Roger to offer, “You worry that it’s something about you. What do they see in me?”

These contributions were the beginning of a deeper consideration of fear of homosexuality, including concerns about being perceived as gay

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<sup>3</sup> Students’ names are pseudonyms.

and about becoming gay. Roger explained that beating up his coworker would have proven to others that he was not gay. Returning to the Shepard case, Lissa wondered whether his murderers had been motivated by a need to resolve their own conflicted feelings: "Maybe they couldn't deal with him being so open and they were ashamed. 'I'm a macho cowboy man.' Could they be hiding something?" Joon asked, "Could someone change from being straight to being gay?" leading Roger to offer more information about his coworker: He had been married and had a child but had recently fallen in love with a man. Then Roger shared his confusion about whether he should maintain a distance from his coworker or accept him as a friend.

Two other men, one Sri Lankan and one Chinese, told of how they had curtailed public affection toward male friends because of the fear of being viewed as homosexual, in the context of U.S. homophobia. The first no longer had dinner with male friends in restaurants as he had done in Sri Lanka ("Some people might think we're gay"), and the second no longer held hands with male friends as he had done in China, explaining that he had never heard of homosexuality before coming to the United States. Several of the men animatedly discussed the loss of closeness with their male friends as a result of these restrictions. The women reported that they faced few such restrictions, pondering the reasons for a greater tolerance of overt closeness between women than between men in the United States.

During the discussion, I played two roles: conversation facilitator and, more judiciously, intervener. As conversation facilitator, I listened, took notes, and asked occasional questions to encourage elaboration. As intervener, I asked the students to examine certain assumptions further. That is, teaching critical thinking is neither an unguided free-for-all nor a didactic lecture but a balance between extended student contributions and gentle challenges by the teacher.

I intervened twice in this class discussion. In the first intervention, I asked the students to question the assumption on which many of their contributions seemed to be based: that homosexuals are primarily interested in making sexual overtures to and converting heterosexuals. Could this notion be based on fears some students had already raised rather than on a real threat? I asked. My other challenge was to ask the students to consider the social origins of their fears as well as alternatives to killing or beating up someone as a way of dealing with those fears. The two interventions were intended to connect the Shepard case, experiences and concerns students had described, and more abstract notions of tolerance and social justice.

This brief description shows that critical dialogue can help students explore their views and those they might not have previously been

exposed to. Although one lesson or course cannot wipe out homophobia or other dangerous attitudes, the students in this class were asked to consider alternatives to intolerance and violence as reactions to difference, values I communicate to all my students, knowing that they may or may not choose to adopt them. Still, I note that, during the discussion, the young men in my class who initially expressed contempt for homosexuals concluded that their scorn was based in fear and embarrassment. That understanding may have been the first step toward a greater appreciation of human complexity.

## CONCLUSION

The current debate about critical thinking is not a harmless academic exchange but a political discussion with serious implications about what should and should not be taught in EAP and L2 composition classes. EAP's pragmatic ideology underlies the view that nonnative-speaking students' "immediate writing needs in their academic classes" (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995, p. 560) should be the exclusive focus of instruction. A dialogic approach to critical thinking, on the other hand, does not choose between immediate needs and the development of social awareness, believing that they can and should be taught simultaneously. A critical EAP teacher responds to the demands of content courses while encouraging students to question academic life and society (Benesch, 1993, 1998, in press).

According to Atkinson (1998), the habitual activities and thoughts of everyday life are better left "under wraps" (p. 133). By contrast, Brookfield (1987), a self-proclaimed critical teacher, posits awareness as a central feature of teaching:

When we become critical thinkers we develop an awareness of the assumptions under which we, and others, think and act. We learn to pay attention to the context in which our actions and ideas are generated. We become skeptical of quick-fix solutions, of single answers to problems, and of claims to universal truth. We also become open to alternative ways of looking at, and behaving in, the world. (p. ix)

Not only can critical thinking be taught through the encouragement of greater awareness, but choosing not to teach critical thinking may result in unquestioning acceptance of prevailing conditions, limiting possibilities for dissent and change.

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# Critical Discourse Analysis: Discourse Acquisition and Discourse Practices

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■ An important concern of critical approaches to language and language learning is to go beyond simply describing conventions of language form and use to show the ways in which such conventions are tied to social relations of power. “Critical approaches differ from non-critical approaches in not just describing discursive practices, but in showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief” (Fairclough, 1992b, p. 12). This awareness of the ideological effects of discourse that critical analysis can bring about can then, it is argued, lead to changes in discourse practices that will result in greater social equality and justice (Fairclough, 1992a, p. 10).

As Widdowson (1998) points out, however, if all discourse is ideological, then “ideological significance can never be discovered, for it is always a function of a particular ideological partiality” (p. 149). Critical approaches, therefore, present a fundamental dilemma: On the one hand, subjects (language users) are positioned by discourse or ideology (Fairclough’s “constructive effects discourse has upon social identities,” 1992b, p. 12); on the other hand, subjects (language users) are supposed to be able to use discourse to create a position of their choosing (an awareness leading to greater social justice). That is, on the one hand, ideology is seen as coercing subjects into certain social practices through discourse; on the other hand, subjects are seen as capable of manipulating the code for their own interests. But if the subjects (or the possible identities of the language user) are formed in discourse, where do awareness and the possibility of interests independent of discourse come from?

Widdowson (1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1998), in a series of critical articles looking particularly at critical discourse analysis (CDA), argues that, amongst other things, the work of Fairclough (1992a) and others confuses language as social semiotic and language as social action: “Textual data can be used as evidence for language systems as social semiotic, or as evidence for language use as social action. But they are not the same thing” (Widdowson, 1995a, p. 167). The confusion, he suggests, is between encoded meanings and pragmatic meanings. The semantics of the lexicogrammar must be linked to context as individuals

negotiate and make sense of their world, and such links cannot be read out of the code itself, however regular the patterns of language use may appear: They are not intrinsic to the code but pragmatic. Thus, for Widdowson, ideology must lie at the pragmatic level, for it is here that social relations are enacted; and shared communication (though it is related to code) is therefore not simply a function of code but rather is anchored in shared realities (p. 165) to which discourse participants index texts in similar ways.

In this report, I show the inadequacy both of Widdowson's (1995a) appeal to shared realities as the basis of shared meanings and of the claims within CDA that a subject can become aware of and then manipulate ideology in discourse. In fact, both Widdowson and CDA, in their focus on awareness and ideological content, entrench a dichotomy between subject and discourse, treating discourse as an object that can be known in some objective way and consequently mastered. I suggest an alternative understanding of the relationship between subject and discourse (and their mutual coproduction) in which discourse is seen as a practice in which both discourse and subject are performatively realised.

From this point of view, discourse acquisition (a crucial matter for L2 education) is considered in terms of the ongoing social production of discourse rather than in terms of the reproduction of socially established but stable language forms and practices (see, e.g., Gee, 1996, p. 139). Discourse acquisition needs to be concerned not with apparent regularities in the form of discourse as object of acquisition but rather with engagement in the processes that sustain and transform discourses. The transitory stability of any discourse is a function of the privileging and marginalising of different heterogeneous elements that contribute to that discourse at any given moment. Such stability is always intersubjectively produced and is not explicable in terms of individual control and intentions. Only in their intersubjective enactment, therefore—not in any conformity to ideals of form or practice—do discourse and subject acquire stability. Discourse acquisition must therefore be linked to exploration of the instability disguised by the apparent stability of discourses rather than to attempts to reproduce specific forms of stability or, in critical approaches, to replace one stable discourse with another, more equitable one.

## SOCIAL DETERMINISM AND INDIVIDUAL AGENCY IN LANGUAGE USE

Critical approaches to language are concerned with the ways in which language in discourse maintains and reproduces social relations of power. Fairclough (1992b) agrees with Foucault that "discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and realities, they construct or

'constitute' them; different discourses constitute key entities in different ways, and position people in different ways as social subjects" (pp. 3–4). For Luke and Freebody (1997), "literate practices . . . are concomitants of what is a social activity, one that is tied to institutional projects of discipline and power . . . moulding, making and disciplining human subjects, populaces, and communities" (p. 3). For Wallace (1992), "our interpretations of texts are socially determined" (p. 67). "All texts construct for their reader a reading position" (p. 68); every text has its "ideal or model reader" (p. 68) and so constrains readers to read in certain ways. Discourses, Wallace adds, are "ideologically determined ways of talking or writing about persons, places, events or phenomena" (p. 68). For Gee (1996), discourses "are always and everywhere social and products of social histories" (p. viii).

These accounts suggest a determinism in which the subject takes up and acts out the role prescribed for it by a discourse. Widdowson (1996) rejects the view that individuals simply act out social roles. Although he agrees that subjects are socialised into sets of beliefs and values—"a Foucault concept of discourse"—that constrain the ways in which discourses are realised, "they are not absolutely controlled by them" (p. 58). He argues that "discourse in the Foucault sense, as ideological and idealised social constraints, can only be activated through discourse in [his] sense: through the pragmatics of individual interaction" (p. 59).

A tension exists between the social role-determining effects of discourse and individuals' capacity to manipulate discourse to achieve their own ends. In rebutting Widdowson's (1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1998) claim that he ignores the multiplicity of possible interpretations of texts, Fairclough (1996) argues that diversity of interpretation is central to his work, as is "the tension manifest in texts and discursive events between the way in which social subjects are discursively determined and constructed on the one hand, and the creative discursive activity of social subjects as agents of their own discourse on the other" (p. 50). Unfortunately, he does not explain how such creativity can operate if social subjects are discursively determined and constructed.

A problem here concerns how the reader-subject takes up the allocated subject position. If, as the arguments above seem to imply, discourse and subject positions are in a sense preestablished, then taking up a position in discourse implies recognition of the discourse. But surely recognition is possible only if one is already positioned in accordance with the discourse. In assuming that a certain reading is preestablished, CDA throws no light on how it is taken up, or acquired.<sup>1</sup> The ideology and subject position enacted by a specific textual realisation

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<sup>1</sup> Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, and Walkerdine (1984, pp. 95–98) discuss precisely this problem with the concept of *interpellation* into discourse, as conceptualised by Althusser (1971).



of a discourse can be read out of the text only if the language code is treated as a social semiotic, in which meanings are a function of the code.

Fairclough (1996) refutes Widdowson's (1995a) assertion that CDA equates text with discourse. Also rejecting Widdowson's pragmatic focus, Fairclough argues that ideologies can be understood only by looking at the "patterns and variations in the social distribution, consumption and interpretation of texts" (p. 50), not in individual texts and the specific readings of them. Widdowson (1996, 1998) responds that Fairclough in fact does not do this and that his analysis is of specific readings (i.e., interpretations) of texts or fragments of texts (1996, pp. 61–67; 1998, pp. 145–148). Unfortunately, this focus on text and specific readings in CDA remains commonplace. Wallace (1992), for instance, suggests that "critical reading involves us in challenging the ideological *content* [italics added] of texts as evidenced in their salient discourses" (p. 69). Clark (1992), following Fowler, Hodge, Kress, and Trew (1979), suggests that "it is possible to pin down in linguistic terms the underlying attitudes and beliefs—or ideology—which are encoded in text" (p. 121).

But whether a subject will respond to a text as an "ideal reader," taking up the "preferred meaning" (Hall, 1980, cited in Janks & Ivanic, 1992, p. 307), remains problematic. This point is perhaps most evident in readings by L2 learners. Indeed, the different intertextual links one brings to a text, the different contexts under which one reads, and the purposes for which one reads a text presumably implicate ideology and power relations in any given reading in different ways. The meaning a text will have cannot be prised out by linguistic analysis; meaning and significance are not "always or only a reflex of linguistic signification" (Widdowson, 1998, p. 143).

Widdowson's (1995b, 1998) critique of CDA rests very much on this point. He argues that in CDA "analysis is subordinated to interpretation" and that consequently "your analysis will be a record of whatever partial interpretation suits your own agenda" (1998, p. 149). Ideology is read into text, not out of it (1995b, p. 515). Certain textual elements are privileged over others in a rather unprincipled and self-interested way, according to Widdowson (1998, pp. 143, 147, 149). Such an approach might provide evidence of the "creative discursive activity of social subjects as agents of their own discourse" Fairclough (1996, p. 50) speaks of, but it subverts CDA's assumption that readings are predictable and ideologically specific. As I argue below, however, Widdowson's own position is also problematic.

## CDA AND AWARENESS OF WHAT?

The emphasis on awareness in critical approaches reaffirms the dichotomy between language user as subject and discourse as object, as it implies a knowing subject and a known object. Thus, CDA's focus on awareness privileges consciousness. According to Fairclough (1992a), "consciousness is a precondition for the development of new practices and conventions which can contribute to social emancipation" (p. 10). But consciousness of what? In the terms of critical approaches, for a person to become conscious of a discourse and its practices would entail not so much immediate consciousness of a discourse itself but rather a reconstruction of the discourse at the metadiscursive level. But if one accepts the argument that discourses construct both the knower and what is known (Fairclough, 1992b, pp. 3–4; Threadgold, 1997, p. 1), and if, as Pennycook (1989) argues, knowledge is always interested, then the consciousness of discourse advocated by CDA can only be a partial and interested consciousness of a reconstruction of a discourse at a metadiscursive level. One is neither in the discourse nor outside it; rather, one is taking up a new position in a new (meta)discourse. Practices and interventions based on such awareness would therefore not necessarily have the subject-intended outcomes because, in important respects, the discourse one intervenes in remains unknown. Such awareness cannot provide mastery over a discourse.

Yet the instrumental view of discourse—that understanding provides a tool for effective intervention—is prevalent in critical approaches. For Janks and Ivanic (1992), critical language awareness seeks to provide ways "in which relatively powerless groups can look after their own interests and maintain their identity through language use" (p. 315). For Clark (1992), the critical teaching of academic writing involves "empowerment" of students, providing them with "an awareness of the discourse conventions of the community" (p. 118) and their consequent "emancipation," in which they "use the power gained to act" (p. 119) in their own interests. Critical awareness provides the students "with opportunities to decide whether to conform to the perceived norms or whether to draw more creatively on their knowledge of them" (p. 119).

This view not only presents discourse as a discrete object that can in some definitive sense be known and mastered but also takes subjects as autonomous agents capable of bending and manipulating discourse to fulfill their own intentions. However, if discourse constructs the subject as well as its object (Fairclough, 1992b, pp. 3–4), then, as subjects engage in discourses, they too will be transformed. Thus the idea that through greater awareness "relatively powerless groups can look after their own interests" (Janks & Ivanic, 1992, p. 315) or can "decide whether to conform to the perceived norms" (Clark, 1992, p. 119) of academic

practices is questionable. From this objectivist view of discourse, to respond to a discourse, subjects must have already acquired whatever is necessary to so respond and understand it in the way suggested. But in such acquisition, the subjects themselves will have acquired a new position, new interests. This point is perhaps more transparent in academic disciplinary discourses; conventions and practices may well be given epistemological force, and engaging them is part of taking up the discourse. Thus, a discourse does not simply oppose one's interests, it also constructs them. Janks and Ivanic's notion of a subject's autonomous acts neglects to take into account the constitutive assumptions about discourse that underlie critical approaches.

The treatment of discourse as determinable and manipulable implies the presence of defining regularities and rules that govern language use. But the status of any attributed rules is problematic. Thomas (1995) distinguishes between *rules*, which are constitutive and apply to grammar, and *principles*, which are regulative and apply to pragmatics (p. 104). However, what grants rules and principles their force is unclear. At the pragmatic level, implicature involves the flouting of Grice's (1975) maxims. According to Cook (1989), at the linguistic level "discourse treats rules of grammar as a resource, conforming to them when it needs to, but departing from them when it does not" (p. 7). The breaking of both types of norms can be meaningful. That is, conformity to such norms themselves is not a necessary condition for the successful production of meaning. The acquisition of discourse thus needs to be linked to the productive process that sustains such rules rather than to their reproduction. Such knowledge about discourse, it can be argued, is the retrospective construct of a metadiscourse and does not represent what is constitutive.

Threadgold (1997) points out that "one does not analyse texts, one rewrites them, one does not have an objective meta-language, one does not use a theory, one performs one's critique" (p. 1). Threadgold (1994) also comments that "language theories, as well as language practices, participate, albeit often unconsciously, in a power struggle to control language and, by implication, literacies" (p. 24). The representation or description of a discourse is partial and constructs a new object and subject position, and the correspondence between this representation and the actual use of or participation in discourse is problematic. As a consequence, a metadiscourse about discourse must surely be an unreliable resource for instrumental intervention. Threadgold (1994) notes that such analyses or representations "are themselves texts which have to be read and interrogated in terms of their historical contextualisation" (p. 24).

Thus there is no guarantee that the actions based upon such a representation will have the effects desired; there is no guarantee that

one's discourse will not "go astray" (Threadgold, 1997, p. 103) and result in unintended and unforeseen meanings. Instrumental mastery over discourse, as presumed by CDA, seems untenable. If engagement with and acquisition of discourse involves the reconstruction of subjects and their interests, the distinction between discourse and subject becomes less clear. A critique of discourse will also entail the critique and transformation of the subject's positions in the discourse. How one might choose to place certain interests against a particular discourse and its effects is unclear, yet it is precisely such choosing and consequent actions that motivate the critical approach of, for instance, Janks and Ivanic (1992) and Clark (1992).

## PROBLEMS WITH WIDDOWSONIAN REALISM

For Widdowson (1995b), CDA engages not in an analysis of the meanings of a discourse but in the attribution of them. Critical analysts are engaged in interpretative acts that read ideology into discourse, not out of it (p. 515). These interpretations are a function not of the texts themselves but of the way these texts are linked to wider contexts. Thus, he argues, discourses in the Foucaultian sense (sets of beliefs, values, assumptions, ideologies; Widdowson, 1996, p. 58) are "abstract concepts" that "can only be actualised through discourse as the pragmatic process of meaning negotiation" (p. 59). However, given that such pragmatic links between text and context are a function of many factors, for instance, judgments concerning which aspects of text (see Widdowson, 1993) and which aspects of context to privilege, which formal and content schemata to employ, and knowledge of how to make such links, it is important to ask what guarantees that discourse participants will interpret similarly.

For Widdowson (1995a), individuals' meanings may converge if they share a common reality. Individuals make the same judgments and pragmatic links between code and context because they "have been socialised into a particular reality and know how to use language to indexically engage with it" (p. 164). He adds, "We achieve meaning by indexical realisation, that is to say, by using language to engage extra-linguistic reality," and in this way "convergence of intention and interpretation" (p. 165) is possible. That is, convergence is possible only "where your reality corresponds to mine" (p. 165). But how, in fact, do individuals' realities correspond?

Widdowson's (1995a) referential view of discourse seems caught up in an objectivist fallacy similar to that in CDA's focus on awareness. Reality itself, it can be argued, is a discursive construction in the sense that reality is the product of privileging elements of experience and the environment over others and forging them into a coherent whole.

Similarly, it is not the empirical presence of contextual elements but the significance certain elements are given over others that triggers pragmatic linking with code. Yet how one chooses among those elements is problematic. Reality is therefore a product of the processing that typifies discourse construction. Arbitration between elements is already a discursive process, and the problematic issue for language learners is how such a reality comes to be constructed for them such that they do make the links Widdowson speaks of. He implies that such a reality precedes discourse, making the production of discourse possible. However, realities can converge only when one already gives significance to certain aspects of context over others. That is, the world is already constructed a certain way; a certain discourse and subject position have already been taken up. But, as Culler (1997) points out, "If we say that meaning is context-bound, then we must add that context is boundless: there is no determining *in advance* [italics added] what might count as relevant" (p. 67).

Although retrospective descriptions of what has taken place are possible, these descriptions are partial and do not explain how a learner came to take up such a reality and its discourse. Reality here is not an empirically inert entity grounding discourse but a meaningful construction, intricately bound up with it. Thus a difficulty with Widdowson's (1995a) account, similar to the problems I have outlined with critical approaches, is that it does not explain how one acquires a discourse or, in his terms, how one recognises a new reality to which code can then be indexed in new ways. In his argument, discourse is possible only because one is already in a certain reality to which one learns to index code in certain ways. Yet the acquisition of discourse is precisely about entering into new realities. If acquisition depends upon already occupying a certain reality—a *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1991), perhaps—then the issue of change and of acquiring a new discourse remains a real problem.<sup>2</sup> Individuals will be bound always to assimilate texts to discursive positions or realities they already occupy. Widdowson (1998) sees such an implicit dogmatism in CDA, which he accuses of "careful selection and partial interpretation of whatever linguistic features suit [its] own ideological position and disregarding the rest" (p. 147). But his own position implies that such a dogmatic approach cannot be avoided.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Calhoun (1995, chap. 5) for a discussion of the problem of social change with Bourdieu's (1991) notion of *habitus*, which Calhoun argues is a theory of social reproduction rather than of social transformation (p. 142).

<sup>3</sup> Steiner (1989) points out how commentaries on texts tend to reduce them to already given prejudices and beliefs. However, he argues, "there is language because there is 'other'" (p. 137), and the text needs to be able to make inroads into the reader. The point is an important one; instead of a dogmatic interpretation of texts according to existing values and beliefs, discourse acquisition is surely about being open to what is new and taking it up in some way.

Thus, the grounding of shared meaning, in either the semiotic system or shared realities, provides a stability and objectiveness to discourse that, I suggest, is not a given but a construct itself. Rather than grounding discourse, such a stability would appear to be the product of discourse. Seeing discourse acquisition in terms of the subject's mediation of objective meanings given through code or shared realities would seem to result in a paradox: To recognise the discourse and the subject position it offers or to enter into the appropriate reality, the subject must always already be in the discourse making appropriate judgments.

## DISCOURSE AS PRACTICE

I have questioned the idea that discourse is an objective entity over which one can attain mastery. Rather than viewing discourse and the subjects engaged in it as social products (as attaining fixed, social characteristics), one might see both as constantly open to new formations, that is, in states of transformation and instability. Any attributed form or stability is an objectifying retrospective construction, as are the perceived realities in which discourses are embedded. Thus I suggest that discourse acquisition is a matter of engagement in a productive process rather than of mastery over and reproduction of constitutive discourse properties. This production is performative in that subject, discourse, and its reality are produced in the moment of instantiation. The practice here is not a reproduction and perfecting of independently existing ideal forms by an autonomous subject. The social, then, does not simply produce discourse types over which subjects obtain mastery. Rather, the social permeates the productive process itself. The representation of discourse and subject as objects of understanding privileges and idealises certain elements over others and fails to capture the contingent convergence of many elements at a unique moment in time and space in which meaning is enacted.

The objective view of discourse subordinates discourse practice to discourse representation. I suggest here, by contrast, that discourse practice (which is what discourse acquisition entails) cannot be so subordinated. In acquiring a discourse, one is engaged precisely in taking up a new subject position, entering a new reality, occupying a new discursive position as subject, and making new representations.<sup>4</sup> The subject does not simply mirror the social (or simply act out social roles; Widdowson; 1996, p. 58); rather, individual actions are given a meaning

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<sup>4</sup> Breaking the bounds of existing discourses—that is, beginning to say what before could not be said—is entailed in acquiring new ones. See Threadgold (1997, chap. 4) for a relevant discussion.

in a social context that is independent of individual intentions<sup>5</sup> and irreducible to individual consciousness.

Discourse acquisition can be seen as a matter of engagement in the social production of such a discourse and its apparent rules instead of as a matter of conforming to and reproducing the defining features of a discourse object. The contingency of each instantiation of discourse demands that the differences, as well as any discernible regularities between such instantiations, be accorded value. Discourse reality and subject are enacted only at the moment of instantiation. Thus perhaps, as Brandt (1990) suggests, literacy (and discourse) “is not a matter of learning how statements stick together but rather of how people stick together through literate (or discursive) means” (p. 6). The descriptions of discourse, which in critical approaches provide the key for intervention, and the rules and conventions often seen as defining a discourse and therefore as elements to be taught are in turn a metadiscursive construction.<sup>6</sup> The force of discourse, then, may lie in what is performed by it, and this is not determined by what can be said about it or by subject intentions.<sup>7</sup> It is not mediated as such by the individual even though the agency of the subject is crucial to discursive instantiation.

In speaking of the agent involved in instantiating discourse, a useful distinction is that between identity and subject. Identity would be equivalent to knowing agents that have intentions, that pragmatically make meaning, and that attempt to master their discourse, whereas the subject might be equated with the agent position taken up unwittingly—that is, the position discovered retrospectively to have been taken up and that is only retrospectively constructed as such. The subject always eludes representation, for once so represented, it is reconstructed as the object of a metadiscourse. The subjective moment of producing a discourse is lost in its objective representation. However, the moment a metadiscourse

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<sup>5</sup> See Cameron’s (1998) comments on intention, to the effect that meanings cannot be dependent upon intentions (p. 442). Only after meanings have been established can intentions be inferred. A discussion of the sociocultural resources used to make inferences is central to her article.

<sup>6</sup> Threadgold (1997) comments that “we confuse the grammatics (the categories we borrow to describe the ineffable experience of language itself) with the grammar that is language itself” (p. 104).

<sup>7</sup> Threadgold (1997), commenting on an Australian High Court decision, states that it “perpetuates and affirms the same (social) structures” (p. 124) even though it seeks to counter them. Also, in discussing a novel by Thomas Keneally, she attempts to show that although his text is antiracist at the level of the ideational function, he “continues to articulate a discourse of racism” (p. 182) at the level of the textual function. Although one may question whether Threadgold’s account is any more than a construction of events, she also emphasises that discourse is unwittingly reproduced because it is embodied. See also Kamler and Maclean (1997) for a study of the acquisition of legal discourse by students in a law school and the role of embodiment in this process. Embodiment can be linked to the performativity of discourse I have alluded to.

produces its object of analysis and critique, that object is also engaged in a subjective enactment or performance that remains undisclosed by the representation. In this respect, discursive representation never captures the practice. Felman (1987) states that “there is a constitutive belatedness of the theory over the practice, the theory is always trying to catch up with what it was the practice was really doing” (p. 24). The subject or agent of practice is lost once it is constructed as a discursive object.

## A TENTATIVE VIEW OF THE INTERSUBJECTIVE CONSTITUTION OF PRACTICE

That practice eludes adequate representation is supported by the approach Felman (1993) takes in her feminist critique of patriarchy and the need to “exorcise the male mind that has been implanted within” (p. 5). Felman asks, “But from where should we exorcise this male mind, if we ourselves are possessed by it?” (p. 5). Feminist reading cannot be a matter of defending the feminist mind and convictions against the male mind by stepping outside the male discourse and sustaining a consciousness radically different to it (p. 5), because one is already in part at least constituted by male discourse. In contrast to Gee, Hull, and Lankshear (1996, p. 13), who support the view that a critique of discourse and change is effective from without, Felman suggests that it must come from within. Reading (the discursive act of making sense) has the potential to liberate because “reading is a rather risky business whose outcome and full consequences can never be known in advance” (p. 5). Felman asks, “Does not reading involve one risk that, precisely, cannot be resisted: that of finding in the text something one does not expect?” and adds that “the danger with becoming a ‘resisting reader’ is that we end up resisting reading” (p. 6), doing no more than imposing on a text/discourse our own prejudices and preconceptions. I have already pointed out that Widdowson (e.g., 1998, p. 151) sees this as a problem with CDA, but I have also suggested that Widdowson’s own anchoring of discourse in shared realities can be subjected to the same criticism.

Felman (1993) suggests that literature, and I have tried to show that discourse, “cannot be subsumed by the cultural prejudices that traverse it and by the ideologies its authors hold” (p. 6). The many factors that are part of realising discourse (code, generic structure, context and links to context, the reader’s purpose, and many others) ensure that objectively discourse is unstable. The discourse and subject positions are a function of the many heterogeneous forces at play at any given moment, a heterogeneity that leaves the final outcome somewhat uncertain. The construction of discourse types with characteristic features is a retrospective metadiscursive construct that privileges certain features over others but does not adequately reflect the radical contingency of any actual



instantiation of discourse.<sup>8</sup> The task, as Felman suggests, is “not to resist the text from the outside but rather to seek to trace within each text its own resistance to itself” (p. 6). The act of critique itself, as a performance, has an emancipatory potential, for it entails a practice in which the subject is repositioned. Theory is involved, but “it is utilising theory as self-resistance”; it is in many respects “a resistance to theory” (p. 133).

Thus, Felman (1993) suggests, critique is not a matter of substituting one discourse (e.g., feminist, counterideological) for another (e.g., masculine, ideological). Ideology lies precisely in the objectifying and stabilising process rather than in the beliefs or meanings produced. What is important, therefore, is the opening up of the difference within a discourse. Discourse acquisition thus might be better understood not in terms of leading learners to the reproduction of stable discourse types but in terms of exploring the heterogeneity and other possible meanings and realities that lie disguised beneath the apparent stability of the meanings that present themselves. Thus, the act of critique itself is a refusal or an act of resistance. In opening up new meanings and discourses, one is neither what one was nor what one will become.

At the moment of practice, an agential subject exists that as yet has not been attributed an identity. For Felman (1993), the act of reading and, I would add, of acquiring a discourse entails the act of assuming this difference. “Assuming, that is, not the false security of an ‘identity’ or a substantial definition (however nonconformist or divergent) but the very insecurity of a differential movement, which no ideology can fix and of which no institutional affiliation can redeem the radical anxiety, in the performance of an act that constantly—deliberately or unwittingly—enacts our difference yet finally escapes our own control” (p. 10). Thus, she adds, one is in the process of “finding out about oneself something one is not a priori in possession of, of finding out, that is, what one does not know what one has in effect become” (p. 11). In the discursive act, therefore, learners do not yet know whom they will become or what meaning their utterances will take on. These identities and meanings find a subsequent definitiveness, but in a retrospectively and intersubjectively constituted space (p. 12).

## CONCLUSION

Central to critical approaches is the social and discursive positioning of subjects, yet also central is the assumption of autonomous subjects

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<sup>8</sup> Parallels could be made here to Scholes’ (1989) notion of centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in reading—the former referring to the inclination for a reading to take on a determinate sense, the latter to the endless interpretative possibilities of any given text—and the consequent lack of definitiveness or stability of meaning this entails.

that can use such discourses to realise their own intentions. Despite Widdowson's (1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1998) persuasive critique of a number of aspects of critical approaches, I have argued that his account of discourse also presupposes a positioned subject, which is a precondition for the pragmatic realisation of discourse. How such positioning occurs is unclear in critical approaches, and Widdowson's critique does not advance the understanding of this crucial issue.

I have argued that acquiring discourse is not a matter of mastering defining characteristics of a discourse, for these characteristics only become such when constructed by a metadiscourse. It is therefore the act of construction itself that is crucial, and this act is contingent on ongoing social and interpersonal processes and is not explicable solely in terms of individual mastery of linguistic and social conventions. These conventions are always open to change and to different interpretations. Meanings are sustained not by intrinsic properties over which mastery can be obtained but by extrinsic social processes that produce what a discourse becomes. Such apparent intrinsic and stable features of discourses are not empirical givens but discursive products of processes of the selection, privileging, and marginalisation of elements.

In this view, the acquisition of discourse does not entail solely the acquisition of determinate features of discourse but rather entails an exploration of the heterogeneous forces at work in producing meanings. This exploration, of course, is what critical approaches have in many respects advocated. However, such critical reflection is not only a means to social ends but is also crucial to the process of engagement with and hence acquisition of discourse. Such critical reflection does not simply serve subject interests; it reformulates them. Critical reflection is a matter not of challenging conventions, for instance,<sup>9</sup> but of engaging with the processes that sustain such conventions and simultaneously providing for the possibility of their transformation. Such engagement, in which subjects themselves are reconstructed, becomes less a matter of being for or against certain practices and more a matter of creating them anew, of participating in constitutive practices.

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<sup>9</sup>See, for example, Clark (1992, p. 135), who speaks of two categories of academic conventions, those that can be flouted and those that cannot. I suggest that all conventions can be flouted, but not just as one pleases. It is not a choice as such but the engagement with (not mastery over) the processes that produces discourse and conventions one way or another.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

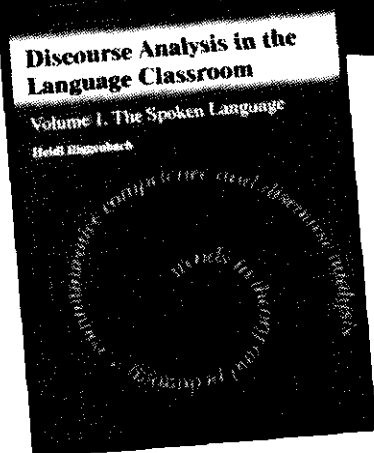
I thank Alastair Pennycook, whose suggestions have contributed much to the final shape this report has taken.

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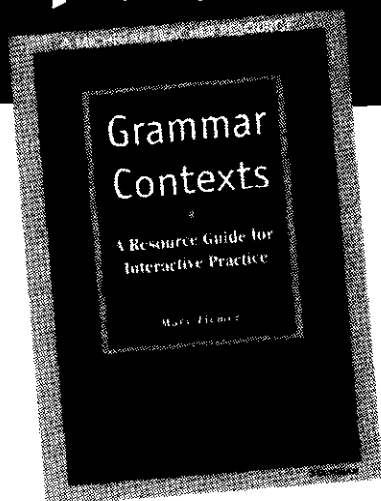
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## REVIEWS

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*TESOL Quarterly* welcomes evaluative reviews of publications relevant to TESOL professionals.

Edited by ALASTAIR PENNYCOOK  
University of Technology, Sydney

### Accents, Ebonics, and Crossing: Thinking About Language, Race Relations, and Discrimination

English With an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States.  
Rosina Lippi-Green. New York: Routledge, 1997. Pp. 286.

The Real Ebonics Debate: Power, Language, and the Education of African-American Children.  
Theresa Perry and Lisa Delpit (Eds.). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 1997; Boston: Beacon Press, 1998. Pp. 227.

Crossing: Language and Ethnicity Among Adolescents.  
Ben Rampton. London: Longman, 1995. Pp. 384.

You may have dark skin, we tell them, but you must not sound Black.  
You can wear a yarmulke if it is important to you as a Jew, but lose the accent.  
Maybe you come from the Ukraine, but can't you speak real English?  
If you just didn't sound so corn-pone, people would take you seriously.  
You're the best salesperson we've got, but must you sound gay on the phone? (*English With an Accent*, pp. 63–64)

■ In my first teacher education class of the year, I asked my students to think back to their adolescence and answer the question, "What made you different from everybody else?" A Black student answered, "Being a foreign student." Explaining further, she told us that she had been born

in Jamaica, emigrated to England, and arrived in the small Canadian city of London, Ontario, as a Black teenager with a British accent. The accent, she said, made her different from other students in her classes, who spoke Canadian English, and was a surprise to her teachers, who did not expect her to speak English the way she did. A White student from Newfoundland, an economically depressed Canadian province located on the East Coast of the country, continued the discussion on language and difference with a story of arriving in the city of Toronto as an elementary student who spoke with a “Newfie”<sup>1</sup> accent. She was told that she did not speak English properly and was classified as having less academic ability than her classmates who spoke a different regional variety of Canadian English. Clearly, the way one speaks in school matters.

This review article discusses three recent publications that speak to the relationships that exist among language, race relations, and discrimination in the United States and Britain. As the opening quotation and stories point out, particular attitudes toward language may result in discrimination based on accent and dialect. Such discrimination, in turn, supports and perpetuates unequal social structures and power relations in society. This topic is taken up by Rosina Lippi-Green and by Theresa Perry and Lisa Delpit, U.S. authors of the first two publications reviewed here. In the third publication, Ben Rampton provides an entirely different perspective with his analysis of the connections young people in Britain are able to make across a variety of ethnic and racial locations by using each others’ language.

## ACCENTS

In *English With an Accent*, Lippi-Green discusses the way linguistic discrimination manifests itself in the classroom, the court, the media, and corporate culture. Of particular interest to *TESOL Quarterly* readers is Lippi-Green’s examination of how the notions of *nonaccent* and *standard language* are really myths used to justify social order, how language ideology affects students in classrooms, how the news media and the entertainment industry promote linguistic stereotyping, and how employers discriminate on the basis of accent.

Leafing through the conference program at the 32nd Annual TESOL Convention in 1998, I noticed a substantial number of presentations focused on the project of “accent reduction.” Similarly, at the publisher’s

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<sup>1</sup> *Newfie* is a derogatory term for people from Newfoundland, who are often stereotyped as slow or stupid and are the victims of a large number of jokes. I use the derogatory term in quotation marks here to illustrate how my student from Newfoundland had internalized the term and used it to describe the way she spoke as a child.

display there were demonstrations of sophisticated—and expensive—audio and computer programs to help ESL teachers and students “eliminate their accent.” In chapter 2, “The Myth of the Non-Accent,” Lippi-Green challenges the effectiveness of this project by arguing that it is not possible to substitute one phonology (accent) for another consistently and permanently. She also raises questions about the politics and morality of such work when she points out an implied promise underlying accent elimination and reduction projects: Sound like us, and success will be yours. Doors will open, barriers will disappear (p. 50). For Lippi-Green, such a promise has two associated problems. First, the claim that it is possible to eliminate an accent is unfounded. It is “reminiscent of magic creams to remove cellulite and electromagnetic belts to make undersized children grow” (p. 50). Secondly, the promise implies that discrimination is purely a matter of language and that it is primarily the “right” accent that stands between marginalized social groups and a world free of racism and prejudicial treatment. Such a view is naive and does not take into account the way race structures access to resources in North America. Importantly, Lippi-Green argues that accent now serves as a point of gatekeeping because “we [Americans] are forbidden, by law and social custom and perhaps by a prevailing sense of what is morally and ethically right, from using race, ethnicity, homeland or economics more directly” (p. 64). Because it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of race, accent becomes “a litmus test for exclusion” (p. 64). (For further discussion on how inequality is reproduced on the basis of race and language in education, see Amin, 1997; Banks & Banks, 1989; Cummins, 1994; Nieto, 1992; Sleeter & Grant, 1988; Tang, 1997.)

Moving to the topic of standard languages, Lippi-Green argues that dominant institutions in the United States promote a standard language that is primarily White, upper middle class, and midwestern. She then goes on to illustrate the ways in which nonstandard varieties of American English are devalued, the processes by which they are devalued, and the devastating impact such devaluation has on users of nonstandard English. Standard English is introduced by the schools, promoted by the media, and further institutionalized by the corporate sector. It is underscored by the entertainment industry (the chapter on this subject, “What We Learn From [Disney’s] Big Bad Wolf,” was my favorite) and underwritten by the judicial system. As a result, not many people recognize that variation in spoken language is systematic, structured, and inherent. Nor do many realize that the idea of a national standard language (like the idea of nonaccent) is an abstraction, a myth that is used to justify the existing social order. Such information is crucial for ESL teachers who need to make decisions around which varieties of spoken and written English they will use, encourage, and teach in their classrooms (for a thoughtful discussion of such decision making, see Delpit, 1995).



## EBONICS

In the United States, the complexity of thinking through decisions on the varieties of English taught in schools has come to light through recent debates on whether students who come to school speaking African American Vernacular English should use that language in the classroom. Perry and Delpit take on this subject in *The Real Ebonics Debate: Power, Language and the Education of African-American Children*, originally published as a special issue of *Rethinking Schools* (Vol. 12, No. 1, 1997). The editors of this nonprofit, independent U.S. newspaper think of their publication as an activist publication that encourages teachers, parents, and students to become involved in the reform movement to build quality public schools for all children in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

The issue begins with two introductory articles by Guest Editors Perry and Delpit. In "I 'on Know Why They Be Trippin'," Perry talks about why some educators see Ebonics as the home and community language of African American children and believe that it should be affirmed, maintained, and used in schools to help African American children acquire fluency in the standard code. She also discusses how mainstream media in the United States misrepresent decisions to use Ebonics in the classroom by portraying them as decisions to abandon the teaching of standard English. In "Ebonics and Cultural Responsive Instruction," Delpit discusses what teachers who work with African American children might do in their classrooms. Taken together, the articles offer much for teachers to think about as they make their own decisions on how best to help their students develop literacy skills in English.

Understanding the ways that this decision is often represented in mainstream institutions like the media is crucial for teachers who decide to use Ebonics (or any language other than standard English) in their classrooms, as such teachers will likely be called upon to justify their pedagogy (see Auerbach, 1993). The topics of other articles about classroom practice include embracing Ebonics and teaching standard English, using literature from African American children's roots, and teaching teachers about African American communication. For those readers who are not teachers but are interested in understanding more about Ebonics, Perry and Delpit offer six articles in a section called "What Is Ebonics?" This section includes a reprint of Baldwin's (1979) letter to the editor published in the *New York Times*, "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?" *The Real Ebonics Debate* concludes with personal essays by two African American women, Joyce Hope Scott

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<sup>2</sup> *The Real Ebonics Debate* is available from Rethinking Schools, 1001 E. Keefe Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53212 USA; telephone 1-800-669-4192; <http://www.rethinkingschools.org>; e-mail [webrs@execpc.com](mailto:webrs@execpc.com).

and Beverly Jean Smith, on how issues of language and education have affected their lives.

## CROSSING

Moving outside the classroom, Rampton's sociolinguistic research into adolescent friendship groups in one neighbourhood in the South Midlands of England focuses on the issue of *language crossing*—the use of Punjabi by young people of Anglo- and Afro-Caribbean descent, the use of Creole by Anglos and Panjabis, and the use of stylized Indian English by all three groups. With its emphasis on the connections that young people make by using each others' languages, *Crossing: Language and Ethnicity Among Adolescents* is of interest to *TESOL Quarterly* readers for its analysis of how far and in what ways language sharing and exchange help overcome race stratification and contribute to a new sense of a racially mixed community. Also of interest is what it has to say about the value of languages other than English for adolescents living in multiracial urban communities. Many educators believe that the integration of immigrant families into English-speaking countries and schools is best facilitated by the learning of English. And, indeed, like Lippi-Green, Rampton demonstrates that at school Creole, Panjabi, and Asian English occupied a position subordinate to that of standard English. However, Rampton also demonstrates that outside the classroom, within expressive youth culture—that is, within drama, popular music, sound-system culture, and *bhangra* (a form of dance music that originated in the Panjab and that integrated a range of popular musical influences, including hip-hop, in its transposition to the West)—Creole had a very high status. The use of Panjabi was also valued.

Generally speaking, both *bhangra* and sound-system culture involved competitive hierarchies in which adolescents of Asian and Afro-Caribbean descent did not readily cede advantage to outsiders . . . aspirant Panjabi and Creole crossers were novices, engaged not in "downward" but in "upward" convergence toward what were now plainly prestigious varieties. (p. 11)

Methodologically, Rampton's study of language in multiracial urban youth culture builds upon the work of ethnographic sociolinguists (Gumperz, 1982a, 1982b; Hymes, 1972a, 1972b). Theoretically, his work departs from two key British texts: Hewitt's (1986) study, *White Talk, Black Talk*, and Gilroy's (1987) cultural history, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. This foundation in both sociolinguistics and sociology allows Rampton to place his linguistic analysis within an analysis of larger historical, economic, cultural, and political processes at work in contemporary Britain. Such an interdisciplinary approach and analysis is an

excellent model for other researchers trying to better understand the complicated relationships among race, class, language, and multiracial community.

## LANGUAGE, RACE RELATIONS, AND THE TEACHING OF ESL

Clearly, Lippi-Green, Perry and Delpit, and Rampton come to their questions of language, race relations, and discrimination from different starting points. Writing for public education activists, Perry and Delpit focus their inquiry on the subject of one particular language policy debate—Ebonics—and use their work to educate readers on the intricacies of that debate and its implications for antiracist education of African American children in the United States. Linguists Lippi-Green and Rampton link their research to questions, issues, and theories in the field of (applied) linguistics as well as to work in other fields (e.g., cultural studies, education, law, media studies, and sociology). Whereas Lippi-Green focuses on questions of institutionalized racism and discrimination, Rampton's interest centres on questions of identity and the ways in which language crossing (over flexible, shifting linguistic boundaries) can, in some instances, provide multiracial youth with new ways of establishing community across racial differences.

Despite their different starting points, the authors of all three works send a common message to us as ESL educators: They ask us to think about the ways relations of power or authority show up in ESL classrooms. In an important article entitled "The Politics of the ESL Classroom: Issues of Power in Pedagogical Choices," critical ESL educator Auerbach (1995) suggests that although issues of power and politics are generally seen as important in language policy and planning initiatives, educators often view classrooms as places that are insulated from external political concerns. Lippi-Green, Perry and Delpit, and Rampton show that the dynamics of power and domination are part of classroom life and the pedagogical decisions that ESL teachers make on behalf of their students.

Lippi-Green's work, for example, pushes us to question the assumptions underlying our pedagogy around pronunciation classes. Why do we hold pronunciation classes? What do we hope for our students? What do our students hope for themselves? What are we promising students who enroll in our pronunciation classes? What promises can we actually deliver on? If our students—who already speak fluent English—tell us that they are enrolled in our class to lose their accent and learn to speak like "native speakers"<sup>3</sup> so that they can get promoted at work, and we

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<sup>3</sup> See Leung, Harris, and Rampton (1997) for an important perspective on the ways the notion of *native speaker* is no longer pedagogically relevant for ESL educators. As replacements the authors suggest the notions of *language expertise*, *language inheritance*, and *language affiliation*.

know that it is not possible to substitute an accent for another in a permanent and consistent way, what kind of pronunciation work, if any, might be valuable to them? If, because of linguistic discrimination in their workplaces, no amount of pronunciation work will help them get promoted, what other pedagogical choices can we make that might help students challenge linguistic barriers at work? Would reading and talking about linguistic discrimination in the workplace—using the students' own experiences and materials created from the discussions in Lippi-Green's work—help students prepare for promotion differently? Would educating employers (through letters, conversations, and workshops) about the myths of accent and standard language ideology be helpful?

Similarly, Perry and Delpit's work asks us to think carefully about the question of which language (varieties) we want students to use in our classrooms. As Auerbach (1995) suggests, many ESL teachers believe that (so-called standard) English is the only acceptable language for communication in their classrooms and have developed elaborate games, signals, and penalty systems to enforce the use of English only. Like Auerbach, Perry and Delpit ask us to think about where these beliefs come from, what we understand and do not understand about our students' (and their families') language choices, and how the media's views on different language practices and policies have informed our own views.

Finally, Rampton reminds us that our students have lives and negotiate all kinds of different (linguistic) spaces outside our classroom. Although our students' progress in acquiring English in our classroom is what preoccupies us, it is not necessarily what preoccupies them. To develop effective curriculum and pedagogy, ESL educators need to learn in which ways English language learning is useful, engaging, and empowering for students and in which ways it is not (see Goldstein, 1997, for another example of such work). We also need to become aware of the tensions that might arise when our students' use of each other's language(s) is seen as appropriation—and, thus, as adversarial—rather than as crossing and connecting. Tensions arising over language practices work against the building of community that many ESL educators try to develop in their classrooms. Understanding how such tensions are created is key in dealing with them in classrooms through reflection and dialogue.

## CONCLUSION

Issues of power, race relations, and discrimination are embedded in both the content and the processes of ESL pedagogy. The more that we as ESL teachers understand about the relationships between language, race, identity, and discrimination both outside and inside our classrooms,

the more effective our work with learners will be. From their various starting points and standpoints, Lippi-Green, Perry and Delpit, and Rampton have given us much to think about as we strive to develop relevant, empowering curriculum and pedagogy for our racially diverse classrooms.

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## The ESL Classroom: Teaching, Critical Practice, and Community Development.

Brian Morgan. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. Pp. 167.

■ It is a pleasure to read a book that is not only interesting and insightful but also stylistically engaging. With a skillful integration of theory and practice, Morgan extends an invitation to readers to enter the world of ideas, classrooms, and communities. *The ESL Classroom: Teaching, Critical Practice, and Community Development* is in many respects unique in the field of TESOL. It is written by an ESL teacher for other ESL teachers, but it speaks with eloquence to researchers, theorists, and administrators in the wider educational community.

The key concepts in the book are introduced in the first of seven chapters, in which Morgan locates his work firmly within the context of critical ESL pedagogy: "In addition to teaching language structure, we might explore how language is used to STRUCTURE expectation, participation, and exclusion in our society" (pp. 5–6). He points out that critical language teaching is underrepresented in the field of ESL, offering three reasons to explain its ambivalent status. First, he argues, many ESL teachers are reluctant to address questions of social power in their classrooms, taking the position that the teaching of language is a neutral activity. "I teach ESL, not politics," is the common cry. Morgan contends, however, that giving priority to structures and functions is itself a form of politics that regulates students' expectations in covert ways. Second, he makes the point that published work on ESL classroom practices is frequently relegated to brief "in the classroom" sections, which offer little opportunity for critical reflection and comprehensive theorizing. As a result, critical ESL pedagogy appears to take place in a theoretical vacuum that is ungrounded in the foundations of the profession. Third, he notes that the history of the development of ESL as a profession has privileged linguistic description over the social sciences, reinforcing a hierarchy in which experts discover so-called truths about language while practitioners apply such findings irrespective of their local sociopolitical conditions.

Chapters 2–6, which constitute the bulk of the book, represent Morgan's response to these three issues, drawing as they do on critical teaching practices in his own classrooms. Morgan demonstrates convincingly that the teaching of language is not a neutral activity, that reflection and theorizing are integral to critical practice, and that practitioners have much to tell experts about the truths of language. Consistent with the goal of addressing teachers, each of the five chapters is centered around a different theme to provide a comprehensive account of the planning and evolution of a series of lessons, complete with teacher's

notes, reading extracts, dialogues, and student writing. However, the lesson plans do not offer a set of recipes for teachers. By drawing on an extensive body of theory, research, and practice, Morgan avoids the oversimplification associated with many “how-to” ESL teaching manuals. In addition to helpful suggestions for practice, the lesson plans provide insight into the rich sociocultural context that made Morgan’s lessons engaging for a particular group of students at a given time and place. Furthermore, Morgan does not shy away from interrogating his own complex relationship not only to his students but also to the theory he draws on. Thus, although he questions on more than one occasion whether his pedagogy may inadvertently silence some of his students, he also acknowledges his “outsider” (p. 113) status in debates on feminist pedagogy.

The themes covered in chapters 2–6 are contemporary issues that affect the lives of the adult immigrants that Morgan teaches in Toronto, Canada. The reader is transported back to the Gulf War, to the changing world of work, to community policing issues, and to environmental challenges. What is particularly noteworthy is the way Morgan seamlessly weaves more traditional aspects of the ESL classroom—grammar, vocabulary, phonetics—into these lessons. In one lesson on the Gulf War, for example, Morgan was able to focus on differences between the denotative and connotative meanings of words. In another lesson on the changing role of women in society, Morgan was able to demonstrate how different intonation patterns can assume very different social relationships. The teacher’s notes offer particularly useful insights on the strengths and limitations of his various classroom exercises. ESL teachers will identify closely with the realities of Morgan’s classrooms and will find his reflections at once pedagogically reassuring and theoretically challenging.

In chapter 7, the final chapter, Morgan considers the implications of his work for both theorists and practitioners. He argues that theorists cannot be complacent about their influence on classroom practice: ESL teachers frequently do not have the resources to attend ESL conferences and are sometimes suspicious of ESL theories developed by people who are remote from the classroom. He argues, conversely, that even though practitioners actively engage in theorizing about their day-to-day practice, they should be encouraged to enter more vigorously into public debates on ESL and claim an equal footing with ESL theorists.

Both Pennycook (1989) and Norton (1997) have made the argument that the world of language education is characterized by an inequitable relationship between predominantly male theorists, on the one hand, and predominantly female practitioners, on the other. Morgan’s work is a welcome counterexample to this trend, collapsing as it does the dichotomies between theory and practice. Moreover, at a time when

debates on critical ESL pedagogy have outdistanced the realities of classroom practice, Morgan's book effectively addresses the perennial question, "But how do you *do* critical work in ESL?"

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## *Errata*

In the review of *Productive Instructional Practices for English-Language Learners: Guiding Principles and Examples From Research-Based Practice* (Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 306), the authors' names should have been given as Russell Gersten, Scott K. Baker, and Susan Unok Marks. The reviewer's name should have been given on p. 307 as Fernando Pólito.

We regret the errors.

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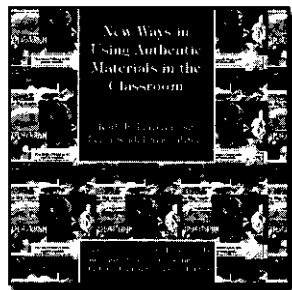
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1. a clear statement of the research questions and the hypotheses that are being examined;
2. descriptive statistics, including the means, standard deviations, and sample sizes, necessary for the reader to correctly interpret and evaluate any inferential statistics;
3. appropriate types of reliability and validity of any tests, ratings, questionnaires, and so on;
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**Interpreting the results.** The results should be explained clearly and the implications discussed such that readers without extensive training in the use of statistics can understand them. Care should be taken in making causal inferences from statistical results, and these should be avoided with correlational studies. Results of the study should not be overinterpreted or overgeneralized. Finally, alternative explanations of the results should be discussed.

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1. Data collection (as well as analyses and reporting) is aimed at uncovering an emic perspective. In other words, the study focuses on research participants' perspectives and interpretations of behavior, events, and situations rather than etic (outsider-imposed) categories, models, and viewpoints.
2. Data collection strategies include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation. Researchers should conduct ongoing observations over a sufficient period of time so as to build trust with respondents, learn the culture (e.g., classroom, school, or community), and check for misinformation introduced by both the researcher and the researched. Triangulation involves the use of multiple methods and sources such as participant-observation, informal and formal interviewing, and collection of relevant or available documents.

**Analyzing the data.** Data analysis is also guided by the philosophy and methods underlying qualitative research studies. The researcher should engage in comprehensive data treatment in which data from all relevant



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**Reporting the data.** The researcher should generally provide “thick description” with sufficient detail to allow the reader to determine whether transfer to other situations can be considered. Reports also should include the following.

1. a description of the theoretical or conceptual framework that guides research questions and interpretations;
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